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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER RECRUITING IN A HIGH
OPTEMPO ENVIRONMENT**

by

Michael B. Weathers

June 2008

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

William Fox
Peter Gustaitis

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**SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER RECRUITING IN A HIGH OPTEMPO
ENVIRONMENT**

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B.S., Vanderbilt University, 1995

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

from the

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates, analyzes, and determines how the current levels of operations tempo (OPTEMPO) and the Army's efforts to mitigate OPTEMPO's negative impacts are affecting the recruitment of U.S. Army officers for service in Special Forces (SF). In light of the dynamic nature of the Army's operational environment today, this thesis does not attempt to provide a conclusive list of all the things that have a positive or negative impact on SF officer recruitment, but rather focuses on aspects that have been most often identified by previous research, highlighted in interviews with SF volunteers and recruiters, and demonstrated by statistical trend analysis.

This thesis contends that SF officer recruiting appears promising for the next several years despite the challenges of today's dynamic operational environment. There are two main reasons behind this success: the aspects of mission satisfaction associated with SF, which appear to be consistent across time, and the benefits of SF OPTEMPO structure, which may be temporary in nature. Both of these elements are currently enhanced by SF's increased exposure to the conventional Army.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate, analyze, and determine how the current levels of operations tempo (OPTEMPO) and the Army's efforts to mitigate OPTEMPO's negative impacts are affecting the recruitment of U.S. Army officers for service in Special Forces (SF). More specifically, the thesis seeks to identify both the aspects of the current OPTEMPO environment that are enabling SF to recruit an increasingly greater number of junior officers and the aspects that may emerge as challenges for SF officer recruitment in the future. In light of the dynamic nature of the Army's operational environment today, the thesis does not attempt to provide a conclusive list of all the things that have a positive or negative impact on SF officer recruitment. The thesis focus is on aspects that have been most often identified by previous research, highlighted in interviews with SF volunteers, and demonstrated by statistical trend analysis.

B. BACKGROUND

1. OPTEMPO Definition

Operations tempo (OPTEMPO), personnel tempo (PERSTEMPO), deployment tempo (DEPTEMPO) – all of these terms refer to the requirement that soldiers be away from their assigned duty location for some reason or another. The term “operations tempo,” or OPTEMPO, can also be used to describe a soldier's workload, whether at home or when deployed. While the wars in the Middle East are taking large numbers of soldiers away from their home base, a significant number are also deployed for other reasons, such as for required military education or field training exercises. The deployment of soldiers away from their home station affects the workload of the soldiers left behind as well. Many of the existing studies of the effects of OPTEMPO show conflicting results, often due to the manner in which the researcher defines and measures

OPTEMPO. The implications are that there is no universal method for measuring OPTEMPO, and the impact of its various forms may not be the same or equal.¹

The purpose of this thesis is neither to prove that a specific aspect of OPTEMPO has a certain result nor to replicate the results of a specific research finding, but to look at the subject as broadly as possible. For this reason, the thesis uses the definition of OPTEMPO articulated by Ann H. Huffman, Amy B. Adler, Carol A. Dolan, and Carl Andrew Castro in their article, “The Impact of Operations Tempo on Turnover Intentions of Army Personnel.” Operations tempo is the “rate of military operations as measured by deployments, training exercises, TDY [temporary duty] assignments, and work hours.”²

2. SF Officers Production Process and Goals

SF is a non-accessions branch for Army officers. This means that an officer must first receive a commission as a second lieutenant and serve in one of the sixteen branches of the Army.³ The fiscal year (FY) in which a specific group of officers receive their commissions is known as their year group (YG) cohort. Approximately one year before an officer’s year group cohort is eligible for promotion to captain, he enters his primary window of time for recruitment into SF. The current average for selection for promotion to captain is thirty-eight months of service as a commissioned officer.⁴ Therefore, the target recruiting population for SF officers in a given fiscal year is generally two years

¹ Ann H. Huffman, Ann H. Amy B. Adler, Carol A. Dolan, and Carl Andrew Castro, “The Impact of Operations Tempo on Turnover Intentions of Army Personnel,” *Military Psychology* 17, no. 3 (2005): 178.

² Ibid., 176.

³ Officers are commissioned through one of three primary sources: the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York; the Reserve Officer Training Corp program at numerous colleges and universities; and the Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia. The basic branches into which they are commissioned are the Air Defense, Adjutant General, Armor, Aviation, Chemical, Engineer, Field Artillery, Finance, Infantry, Military Intelligence, Military Police, Medical Service Corps, Ordnance, Quartermaster, Signal Corps, and Transportation Corps..

⁴ U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Military Personnel: Strategic Plan Needed to Address Army’s Emerging Officer Accession and Retention Challenges*, GAO-07-224 (Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office, January 2007), 27.

after their commissioning.⁵ After volunteering for SF, the officer undergoes a multiphase assessment, selection, and training process. It begins with the Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) selection board at Army Human Resources Command and culminates with eighteen to twenty-four months of job-specific training conducted primarily at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Upon completion of this initial entry training, new SF officers incur an additional service obligation of three years and are sent to one of five operational SF groups.⁶ While SF has accepted officers from other services via inter-service transfer, these former Air Force, Navy, and Marine officers comprise less than one percent of the SF officer volunteers in a given year group cohort.⁷

Prior to 9/11 and even up to FY 2005, SF's targeted production for new captains was 105 per year group cohort. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review directed that SF grow by 33 percent beginning in FY 2007 in order to meet the increased demand for SF soldiers in the global war on terror (GWOT).⁸ Due to the expansion of the SF operational groups, the requirement for SF-qualified captains per year group cohort increased to 155 beginning in FY 2006. This translates to an increased recruiting goal from approximately 300 officers per year group to 450 per year group. SF recruiters have reached these increased goals for each year group cohort recruited, with over 500 officers volunteering for SF from YG 2005, the most recently completed recruiting class.⁹

⁵ Because the fiscal year (which begins on 1 Oct.) and the promotion boards to captain (which historically meet in the second quarter) do not line up directly, there is some overlap of recruiting FYs and targeted year groups. However, generally speaking, the prime recruiting window for an officer is two years after his commissioning. For example, YG 2005 officers were targeted for recruitment from March 2007 to February 2008.

⁶ Department of the Army (DA), Army Regulation (AR) 350-100: Officer Active Duty Service Obligations (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 8 August 2007), 8.

⁷ U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) Directorate of Special Operations Proponency (DSOP), "Special Forces Officer Data YG 2003-2005," provided to the author 18 April 2008. The year group is defined as the fiscal year in which an officer was commissioned into active service.

⁸ The Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, February 6, 2006), 44.

⁹ USAJFKSWCS DSOP, "Special Forces Officer Data YG 2003-2005."

3. Environmental Challenges

The success that SF has achieved in meeting its officer recruiting goals seems somewhat counterintuitive, given the dynamics of the operational environment today. In the pre-9/11 period, the high OPTEMPO and its impact on family life were often seen as the most negatives aspects of joining SF.¹⁰ The post-9/11 period saw the highest level of OPTEMPO experienced to date by America's all-volunteer force. Yet SF is reaching new heights in officer volunteer numbers. The Army also is becoming increasingly concerned about the retention of its junior officers. A survey in 2005 found that 48 percent of the officers leaving the Army were doing so because of long family separations, and 42 percent of these officers felt there were too many deployments. Their reasons are strikingly similar to those that soldiers gave for not volunteering for SF in the pre-9/11 period.¹¹

But these are not the only challenges facing the Army in today's recruitment environment. The Army is not only attempting to maintain its current force, it is attempting to grow. In order to rapidly increase the number of officers accessed each year, the Army has increased the number of officers produced by Officer Candidate School (OCS).¹² In the future this development could be troubling for SF officer recruitment as OCS officers are traditionally older, married, and less likely to volunteer for SF duty.

Most likely, there are multiple reasons for the success of SF in recruiting officers in the post-9/11 world. It is also probable that some degree of this success is impacted by the Army's current pace of OPTEMPO and the actions taken by the Army to grow the force. Understanding the nature of these impacts and what they imply for the future is

¹⁰ Ann M. Herd, and Martha L. Teplitzky, *Special Forces Recruiting: An Overview of Current Procedures and Issues* (Alexandria: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, September 1992), 24.

¹¹ Charles A. Henning, *Army Officer Shortages: Background and Issues for Congress*, RL333518 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, July 5, 2007), 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, 12.

necessary to ensure the continued success of SF officer recruitment. The goal of this thesis is to provide some of that required insight.

C. OUTLINE

Chapter II examines previous and ongoing research on the impact of OPTEMPO on the Army. It discusses various positive and negative benefits of OPTEMPO and the observable impacts of OPTEMPO today. Finally, it examines the implications of these issues for the ability of SF to recruit the officers necessary to meet its needs.

Chapter III examines the affect that exposure to SF personnel has on officer recruitment and demonstrates the multiple ways that such exposure has increased in the post-9/11 period. It discusses the increases that appear to have the most impact on SF officer recruitment. The chapter also attempts to determine whether the information provided by this exposure is positive for SF and therefore beneficial to SF recruitment. Finally, the chapter examines the affect of the length and timing of exposure on recruitment.

Chapter IV begins with an examination of changes in Army officer accessions in order to determine if and how these change may impact future SF officer recruitment. More specifically, the chapter examines the changes in four main areas: the sources of commission, the distribution of officers by branch, the age of officers, and officers' marital status. After determining the nature of the changes and the impact of the changes on SF officer recruitment, the chapter proposes an expected value model for predicting plausible future outcomes for SF officer recruitment.

Finally, Chapter V presents conclusions and recommendations for SF officer recruiting in the future. While the findings of the thesis and the resulting recommendations focus on officer recruiting, some may also apply to enlisted in-service recruiting as well.

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II. OPERATIONS TEMPO

A. INTRODUCTION

“Officer retention patterns are changing, causing the services increasing worry about continuation rates, particularly among O-3s [captains],” wrote Jim Garamone for the American Forces Press Service. “Army officials said departing officers most frequently mentioned operations tempo and personnel tempo as major irritants during their exit interviews. The officers said they saw deployment time growing and felt they couldn’t take even more time away from their families.”¹³ Garamone wrote this article, not in response to the current level of operations tempo (OPTEMPO), but in May 2001. Obviously, concern about the effects of OPTEMPO is not a new issue.

OPTEMPO in the Army has been on the rise since the end of the Cold War as deployments increased while the size of the Army decreased. September 11 and the resultant wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have produced a historically unprecedented level of OPTEMPO. The current fifteen-month deployment tours for units in the Middle East represent the longest individual deployment timeline since World War II. The length of these deployments is exacerbated by the frequency with which they occur. Current Department of Defense (DOD) guidelines state that the deployment rate goal for active army units is a one-year deployment to Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) followed by two years at home station. For a large portion of the force, this goal has not been met. In the just over six years since 9/11, twelve of the Army’s forty-three Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) have served three tours in Iraq or Afghanistan and five BCTs have served four.¹⁴

¹³ Jim Garamone, “DoD Examines Captain/Lieutenant Retention,” American Foreign Press Service, 17 May 2001, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=45844>.

¹⁴ Lawrence J. Korb and Sean Duggan, “Quality of Life in the Military,” Center for American Progress (December 2007), 3, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2007/12/pdf/military_life.pdf.

This chapter examines previous and ongoing research on the impacts of OPTEMPO on the Army and discusses its various positive and negative benefits. Finally, it examines the implications of these OPTEMPO issues for SF's ability to recruit the officers necessary to meet its needs.

B. OPTEMPO RESEARCH

A substantive body of research has been done on the impacts of OPTEMPO. This collective research involves a variety of approaches and has produced a variety of findings.¹⁵ Many reports find a positive correlation between OPTEMPO and the intentions of service members to remain in the military. That is to say, the more OPTEMPO rises, the more likely it is that a soldier will remain in the military. Other studies find negative correlations between OPTEMPO and turnover intentions. The implication is that the more a service member deploys, the more likely he is to leave the service.¹⁶ Some research finds both positive *and* negative correlations, while other research is unable to establish any statistically significant relationship at all.¹⁷

This thesis does not address all of the various studies and findings on OPTEMPO. The thesis focuses on Army officers in an OPTEMPO environment characterized by long deployments to predominately hostile locations. Therefore, the discussion here is limited to specific studies that, for reasons of research design or findings, appear to have the most important implications for Army officers in the current environment of long and hostile deployments.¹⁸

¹⁵ James Hosek, Jennifer Kavanagh, and Laura Miller, *How Deployments Affect Service Members* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2006), 5.

¹⁶ Turnover intentions and retention can be described in two ways: as a function of the intention to leave the service or as the intention to remain in the service. The multiple studies discussed in this work use both perspectives; therefore their use of the terms *positive* or *negative* to describe a correlation between OPTEMPO and retention may be the opposite of the relationship described above. In order to avoid confusion in this work, the thesis uses the terms *positive* and *negative* to describe the relationship between OPTEMPO and the intention to remain in the service. While this may in effect change the terms as used in the studies discussed, it does not alter the fundamental relationships described.

¹⁷ For the most complete summaries of past literature on OPTEMPO, see Hosek, et al., 5–32, and Huffman et al., 176–184.

¹⁸ This is not to imply that the studies selected focus only on officers or long and hostile deployment; however, each study selected focuses on at least one of these two aspects specifically.

The first of these specific studies was James Hosek and Mark Totten's work on the impact of long and hostile deployments on retention. Hosek and Totten focus on the impact of long or hostile deployments on the reenlistment patterns of active-duty members from all four armed services.¹⁹ Their findings include both a positive and negative correlation between the reenlistment of service members and OPTEMPO. Specifically, a deployment of "30 days or longer or duty in a hostile area is in fact associated with a higher reenlistment probability" as compared to service members who do not deploy. However, this positive correlation decreases and becomes negative as the length and danger of the deployment increases.²⁰

The findings of this study were reproduced and expanded by Ronald D. Fricker. Fricker worked with Hosek and Totten's general framework to examine the impact of long or hostile deployment on officers specifically. In his study, he finds that the "fundamental trend for junior and mid-grade officers was that more deployment was associated with higher retention." However, for junior officers (captains and below) hostile deployment decreases this correlation.²¹ Fricker also notes that "among junior officers with the same amount of deployment, we generally observe lower retention among those with a larger fraction of hostile deployment."²² So while deployment, even hostile deployment, produces a positive outcome of higher officer retention, there appears to be a tipping point where this positive outcome begins to diminish.

Huffman et al.'s article on the effects of OPTEMPO on turnover intentions in the U.S. Army also demonstrates a mix of positive and negative correlations. One of their five principal hypotheses is that that turnover intention in the Army may be curvilinear as opposed to linear.²³ A linear relationship would suggest that as OPTEMPO rises or falls, so does the likelihood that a soldier will either stay in the service or get out. This

¹⁹ J. Hosek and M. Totten, *Does PERSTEMPO Hurt Reenlistment? The Effects of Long or Hostile PERSTEMPO on Reenlistment* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1998), xi.

²⁰ J. Hosek and M. Totten, 55–57.

²¹ Ronald J. Fricker, "The Effects of Perstempo on Officer Retention in the U.S. Military" (Santa Monica: RAND, 2002), xii.

²² *Ibid.*, xiii.

²³ Huffman et al., 185.

relationship is pictured in Figure 1 for both a positive and negative correlation. A curvilinear pattern would suggest that at low and high levels of OPTEMPO, soldiers would be most likely to get out of the service. However, at some moderate level of OPTEMPO, soldiers would be more likely to stay in the service. These relationships are illustrated in Figure 2. Huffman et al.'s research produced partial, although not conclusive, support for this assertion.²⁴

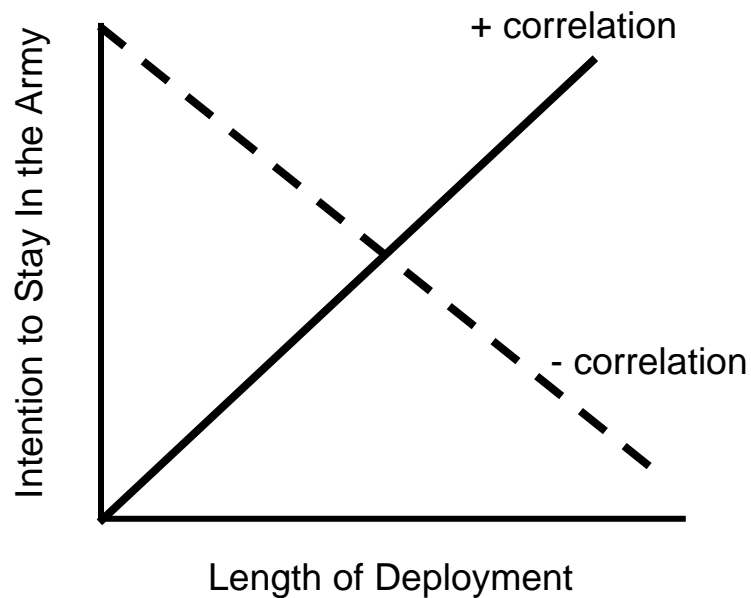


Figure 1. Linear Relationship.

²⁴ Huffman et al., 185. 191.

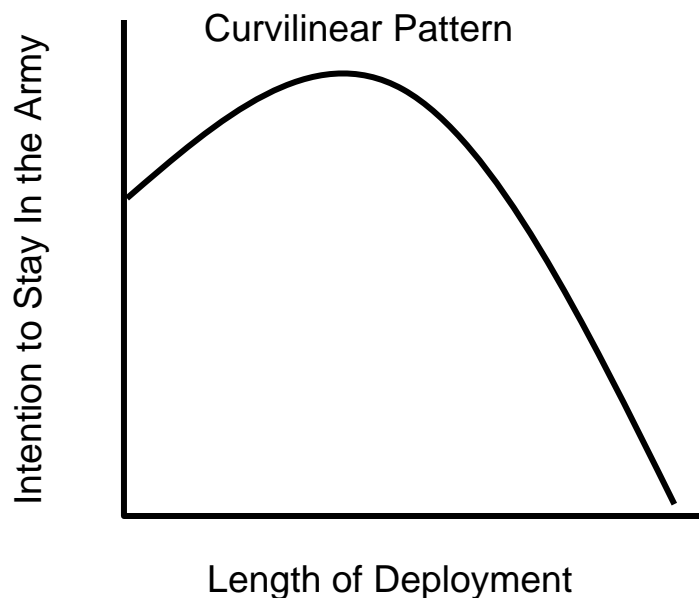


Figure 2. Curvilinear Relationship.

Where an individual soldier falls on this curve is highly personal in nature. Huffman et al. found through interviews that reactions to OPTEMPO depend significantly on the individual's circumstances. Attitudes toward work and personal circumstances lead soldiers to make different decisions based on very similar factors. Huffman et al. point out that "OPTEMPO was an issue for many officers ... [they are] too long; too frequent; and for some too unpredictable.... For others, however, deployments were exciting and gave them opportunities to use their skills and lead soldiers."²⁵

The studies of OPTEMPO and its impacts discussed above are based on research conducted prior to 9/11 and the onset of OEF and OIF. They are based on "deployments that were shorter, less frequent, smaller, and different in nature than the current deployments."²⁶ James Hosek, Jennifer Kavanagh, and Laura Miller's 2006 study on the

²⁵ Huffman et al., 195–196.

²⁶ Hosek et al., 2.

impacts of OPTEMPO is more current. Their research includes an interdisciplinary approach, extensive service member interviews, and statistical analysis of survey data, all in a 2003–2004 timeframe.²⁷

Building on many previous findings that OPTEMPO may have both positive and negative outcomes, be curvilinear in nature, and be highly individual, Hosek et al. hypothesize that service members can be broadly categorized into three types: those who prefer some level of deployment (Type 1), those who prefer to be deployed all the time (Type 2), and those who prefer no deployment time at all (Type 3). With that as their basic assumption, they build models to reflect the pattern of changes in an individual's job satisfaction (which they term "utility") as OPTEMPO increases.²⁸ Figure 3 illustrates their proposed relationship between the three types of individuals, job satisfaction, and deployment length. Hosek et al. further hypothesize that, while all three individual types are present in the military, Type 1 is the most prevalent and that the specific length of deployment preferred by these service members (or the maximum position along the satisfaction curve) is dependant on the individual.²⁹ While their research does not conclusively prove their model, it does find multiple points in both their focus groups in quantitative analysis that support it.³⁰

²⁷ Hosek et al., 1–30.

²⁸ Ibid., 5–11.

²⁹ Ibid., 10.

³⁰ Ibid., 56–67, 83–85.

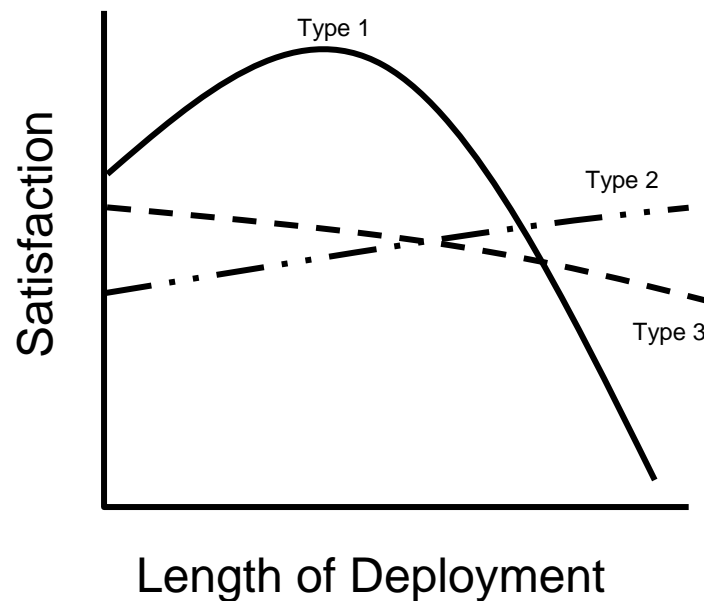


Figure 3. Hosek et al. Preferences for Deployment.³¹

In addition to finding supporting information for a curvilinear pattern of OPTEMPO impacts, Hosek et al.'s study outlines multiple positive and negative aspects associated with OPTEMPO. In their quantitative analysis, Hosek et al. find a negative correlation between OPTEMPO (as measured by higher than usual work stress) when viewed in total, however they find the opposite correlation to be true when viewing many of the individual variables they combine to measure stress as a whole.³² These individual variables, when combined with the results of their focus groups, help to identify the positive and negative aspects of high OPTEMPO that will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Army itself is also studying closely the impacts of OPTEMPO on its service members today. It is paying specific attention to captains. The Army is conducting

³¹ Hosek et al., 10.

³² Ibid., 59–85,

extensive focus groups and surveys to examine the impacts of OPTEMPO on soldiers returning from fifteen-month tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. This effort is being led by Brigadier General (BG) Michael Linnington.³³ BG Linnington and a team of officers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and family members visited each of the thirteen Army BCTs that had redeployed from OIF and OEF as of March 2008. They conducted focus groups and surveys with junior officers (predominately captains), enlisted soldiers, NCOs, and their spouses. While the findings from these efforts have not yet been finalized or published, BG Linnington provided a summary of many of his teams general findings to the author in a personal interview on 28 March 2008. BG Linnington's findings support the three main trends across the four studies discussed above: 1) OPTEMPO has both positive and negative effects; 2) the positive and negative effects fall off after a particular tipping point is reached in the length of the deployment; 3) the location of this tipping point is highly dependant on personal circumstances.³⁴

There are significant limitations to all the studies discussed. First, only Hoesk et al.'s and BG Linnington's work are based on data gathered from the post-9/11 period, and the nature of the conflict in both Iraq and Afghanistan and the lengths of deployments to these areas have changed multiple times since Hoesk's data was gathered. Only BG Linnington's work potentially assesses the aggregate effects of OPTEMPO on today's officers. Second, there are multiple variables involved in assessing the impacts of OPTEMPO on service members. No single study can capture them all. Given the dynamic changes in the nature of OEF and OIF over a relatively short period of time, multiple complementary studies have simply not been possible. For these reasons, it would be unwise to view the previous findings as conclusive or deterministic of future impacts of OPTEMPO. However, the consistent nature of many of these findings does provide insights into plausible future OPTEMPO effects.

³³ For a general discussion of this effort, see Yochi J. Dreazen, "Army Examines Officer Retention," *Wall Street Journal*, 26 March 2008, <http://www.proquest.com>.

³⁴ Brigadier General Michael Linnington, USA, phone interview with author, 28 March 2008.

C. RETENTION

The studies discussed above focus on the relationship between turnover and high OPTEMPO. They advance the position that a rise in OPTEMPO is not related in a linear fashion to a decrease in retention. Current retention data for U.S. Army officers also supports this position.

Multiple media reports have expressed concern over the increasing numbers of junior officers leaving the Army.³⁵ These reports often cite either anecdotal evidence of junior officers leaving en masse from a specific unit or single data points on retention that do not account for historical trends. These reports specifically focus on recent retention of specific groups of officers such as USMA graduates. Officers from Department of the Army (DA) Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G-1) point out more comprehensive statistics that suggest that media reports of a “crisis” with junior officer retention is a significant overstatement.

The first point these officers make is that OPTEMPO in and of itself does not explain why an officer gets out of the service. According to officers in the G-1, approximately 60,000 junior officers (captains and below) served or are serving on active duty between FY 2001 and FY 2007, over 50 percent of whom deployed in support of OEF or OIF. Almost 19,000 junior officers left the Army in this same time period, of which only 20 percent had deployed.³⁶ Second, while officer retention of some specific groups is trending toward the upper bounds of the historical norms, junior officer retention rates in the post-9/11 period are not higher than they were in the pre-9/11

³⁵ For example see Bryan Bender, “West Point grads exit service at high rate,” *The Boston Globe*, 11 April 2007, http://www.boston.com/news/nation/washington/articles/2007/04/11/west_point_grads_exit_service_at_high_rate/. See Andrew Tilghman, “The Army’s Other Crisis,” *Washington Monthly* (December 2007), <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2007/0712.tilghman.html>.

³⁶ Chief of Officer Division, U.S. Army G-1, phone interview with author, 9 April 2008.

period.³⁷ These statistics led the Army to conclude that “to date, the data do [*sic*] not show heightened levels of junior officer departures that can be tied directly to multiple rotations in Afghanistan or Iraq.”³⁸

D. POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF OPTEMPO

The positive and negative correlations between OPTPEMPO and turnover intentions highlighted in the previous section and supported by current retention rates indicate that OPTPEMPO has both positive and negative benefits. The studies discussed also indicate that the benefits differ in importance between individuals, between circumstances, and over time. It is possible to compile an extensive list of various aspects of deployment that may be viewed as positive or negative. However, the discussion here will be limited to those positive or negative aspects identified in at least two of the previously discussed studies. This method produces four major impacts: two positive and two negative. While the list is not exhaustive, it illuminates important points for discussion later in the chapter.

The most commonly cited positive impact of OPTPEMPO is the opportunity that deployment provides for a soldier to participate in a meaningful mission. The majority of the OPTPEMPO measurements used in the above studies are correlated to real-world missions (as opposed to deployments for training or military education). These types of deployment provide soldiers the opportunity to execute missions that give them personal satisfaction despite the dangers or hardships involved.³⁹ The second positive aspect identified in multiple studies is the increase in pay and financial benefits associated with deployment. Dependant on the location, type, and length of the deployment, the financial benefits of deployment can be significant. The benefits often offset the negative impacts

³⁷ Policy Analyst, U.S. Army G-1, email correspondence with author 10 April 2008 and 2 May 2008. For a more detailed discussion of these statistics, see Jaron Wharton, “Anecdotal Evidence of a Hollowing Force?” Center for a New American Security (May 2008), <http://www.cnas.org/attachments/contentmanagers/2127/Junior%20Officer%20Retention%20May%202008.pdf>.

³⁸ Jennifer Griffin, “U.S. Army Isn’t Broken After All, Military Experts Say,” *Foxnews.com*, 19 March 2008, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,339296,00.html>.

³⁹ Hosek et al., 50–53, 87–88; Huffman et al., 195–197; Linnington.

of high OPTEMPO.⁴⁰ The extensive use of monetary incentives for combat deployments and to encourage longer service by enlisted soldiers, NCOs, and, most recently, junior officers only furthers this point.

The most commonly cited negative impact of high OPTEMPO is the impact on a service member's family. These impacts are multifaceted. They include not only the time separated from family, but the unpredictability that accompanies periods of high OPTEMPO. These impacts also do not end with deployment, but include periods of reintegration from deployment and periods between deployments as service members prepare for future deployment.⁴¹ The second most consistent negative issue of deployment is work overload. High OPTEMPO is indicative of longer than normal work hours, whether deployed or at home. Of these two, deployment is generally regarded as having the highest work overload. To the extent that a service member is deployed longer, the overload increases respectively. Therefore, as with family separation, the negative impact of work overload increases with the length of deployment.⁴²

E. OPTEMPO AND SPECIAL FORCES OFFICER RECRUITING

High OPTEMPO is not a new phenomenon for SF and the impacts of high OPTEMPO on SF recruiting has been well documented. A survey taken of SF recruiters in 1992 found that the most commonly perceived negative factor about joining SF was its high OPTEMPO and its negative effects on family.⁴³

There is no debate about OPTEMPO's significant rise in the post-9/11 period. And the evidence suggests that this rise has not been proportionally equal between the conventional Army and SF. In the pre-9/11 period, there was a significant disparity between deployment rates of conventional Army soldiers and SF soldiers. In 1998, surveys of over 28,000 Army service members showed 37 percent of respondents reported less than one week of deployment. The median deployment length for the Army

⁴⁰ Hosek et al., 88-89; Linnington.

⁴¹ Hosek et al., 89-92; Huffman et al., 195-197; Linnington.

⁴² Hosek et al., 89-92; Huffman et al., 195-197; Linnington.

⁴³ Herd and Teplitzky, 24.

was five weeks, with an average length of just over seven weeks. A corresponding survey of over 4,300 Army Special Operations Forces (SOF) found that the only 13 percent had no deployment in the last year, the average deployment length of SOF soldiers was 104 days (just under 15 weeks), and over 18 percent had deployments of over twenty-six weeks.⁴⁴

In the post-9/11 period this disparity shrank. In FY 2001, 54 percent of the Army experienced some level of deployment, with deployed service members averaging 51.3 days deployed. When factored across the entire Army, deployment averaged 27.6 days per service member. By FY 2003, these deployment averages had tripled: 46 percent of the Army deployed with an average deployment length of 160.8 days. Factored across the entire service, the average deployment length was 74.4 days. These averages may reasonably be larger today because of the OIF troop surge and fifteen-month tour lengths. Figures are not immediately available on the rate of SF deployment in the post-9/11 period. However, to replicate the rise demonstrated by the conventional Army, deployed SF members would have to average over 300 days deployed per year. Numerous discussions between the author and members of the SF community did not indicate that this is the case. The structure of SF deployments, which will be discussed later in the chapter, does not support this magnitude of a rise in the SF deployment rate.

The reduction of the disparity between the conventional Army and SF does not, in and of itself, explain why SF may be more successful at recruiting officers today than it was in the pre-9/11 period. While a reduction of the disparity between SF's and the conventional Army's OPTEMPO rates may increase the likelihood that potential volunteers will not be *discouraged* from volunteering due to high SF OPTEMPO rates, this reduction does not necessarily *encourage* new volunteers. Viewed only in terms of total days deployed, OPTEMPO would seem to play a neutral role at best for SF recruitment.

To further examine what specific elements of today's OPTEMPO may be contributing to SF's increasing success in officer recruiting, this thesis will first provide a

⁴⁴ Hosek and Totten, 27, 32–33. It should be noted, that while this group included all Army SOF, 52% were SF. It is assumed that the SF deployment rate was generally consistent with the rates described.

framework for discussing why, generally, an officer would choose to volunteer for SF. This thesis will use Equity Theory to provide this framework.⁴⁵ Equity Theory is applicable as a framework for this examination for multiple reasons. The Army is engaged in an exchange relationship with its officers, one in which the officer provides inputs (his skills, education, time, work, etc) for which the Army provides him with outcomes (pay, benefits, promotion, status, etc).⁴⁶ Equity Theory posits that before an officer chooses to volunteer for SF, he must first make a comparison between the relationship of the inputs and outcomes in his current branch to the relationship he believes would exist if he were an SF officer. It also states that when an individual believes that his ratio of inputs and outcomes in his current exchange relationship is unequal to that of a comparative exchange relationship, he may seek to leave his current relationship.⁴⁷ Equity Theory would therefore predict that an officer would volunteer for SF when he perceives his ratio of inputs and outcomes will be greater in SF than it is in his current branch. Equity Theory also supposes the results of this comparison are highly individualistic in nature.⁴⁸

Combining the terms of the previous examination with Equity Theory, this thesis classifies OPTEMPO as an outcome in the exchange relationship. SF can therefore improve its input and outcome ratio by either producing more positive impacts of OPTEMPO or reducing negative impacts of OPTEMPO. This thesis contends that as officers perceive SF to produce a more positive input to outcome ratio than their current

⁴⁵ J. Stacy Adams, "Inequity in Social Exchange," in *Advances in Social Psychology*, vol. 2, ed. Leonard Berkowitz, (New York: Academic Press, 1965), 267-299. The application of equity theory to explain observable OPTEMPO trends in the Army today was articulated in Huffman et al. It is not the contention of this thesis that Equity Theory is the only theory to explain the impact of OPTEMPO on SF recruiting, only that it is a legitimate framework for understanding the issue.

⁴⁶ Adams, 277-278.

⁴⁷ Adams, 280-294. Adams classifies six ways in which the person can balance his relationship: alter his inputs, alter his outcomes, distort his perceptions of his inputs and outcomes, leaving the relationship, actively or cognitively distort the outcomes or inputs of the other in the exchange, or change his object of comparison. Any of these six actions would have impacts on the Army, but leaving the relationship, whether leaving the Army or leaving his basic branch for SF, is the focus of this thesis.

⁴⁸ Elaine Walster, Ellen Berscheid, and G. William Walster, "New Directions in Equity Research," in *Advances in Social Psychology*, vol. 9, ed. Leonard Berkowitz and Elaine Walster, (New York, NY: Academic Press, 1976), 2-5.

branch in the Army, they are more likely to volunteer for SF.⁴⁹ This assertion is founded on the assumption that officers have enough information to form an accurate comparison that will illuminate these differences. The validity of this assumption will be discussed in a later chapter.

1. Reducing the Negatives

The primary reason to believe that SF OPTEMPO has not risen at a rate equal to that of the conventional Army is the difference between the Army's and SF's deployment structure. Since the beginning of OIF, the length of deployment for conventional Army units has generally not been less than twelve months. Since the announcement in January 2007 of the "troop surge" in Iraq, deployments have been fifteen months in length. This applied to units both in OEF and OIF. These fifteen-month deployments are scheduled to end 1 August 2008, when they will be reduced back to twelve months. However, units will still only receive twelve months between deployments.⁵⁰ SF units have taken a different approach. SF units in OEF and OIF have generally followed a six to eight month deployment schedule, with approximately the same amount of time in between rotations. So while it is common for SF officers to have a higher number of deployments to OEF or OIF than their conventional Army counterparts, the length of each of the deployments is normally significantly shorter. Therefore, while it may not be true that SF has a lower OPTEMPO rate than the conventional Army, in terms of total days deployed per year when considered over multiple years, the rates of the two seem much closer today than they were in the pre-9/11 period.

This difference in tour lengths is not lost on today's officers. BG Linnington notes that officers are clearly aware of this difference and repeatedly asked him, "why can't we

⁴⁹ The use of the word "perceive" is deliberate. The impact of incongruence between perception and reality are significant; however, they are not an issue for this thesis. The thesis contends that an officer can only perceive what his outcomes and inputs would be as an SF officer until he volunteers and completes SF training.

⁵⁰ Lolita C. Baldor, "Source: Army war tours to be shortened," *The Associated Press*, 6 April 2008, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/04/ap_bush_iraq_040408/.

[conventional Army units] do deployment like they [SF] do it?” The officers and families he interviewed felt that they could do six to eight month deployments “on the fly.” Not only do officers perceive these deployments as shorter, but also more predictable.⁵¹ The shorter deployments still allow officers to take advantage of deployment benefits, like increased pay or greater job satisfaction, while allowing officers and their families to better limit the negative aspects such as missing important family events or requiring extensive reintegration with family when they return.⁵² The shorter deployment lengths are also consistent with the findings of all the previous OPTEMPO studies that demonstrate that the positive impacts of OPTEMPO diminish over time. Each of the studies discussed above predict that, as long as the minimum desired levels of OPTEMPO are met, shorter deployments will have lower negative impacts than longer deployments.

2. Enhancing the Positives

SF’s ability to enhance the positive impacts of OPTEMPO is less clearly demonstrated in the literature than its ability to reduce the negative impacts. Consider the two primary benefits of OPTEMPO discussed here: the opportunity to participate in meaningful, real-world missions and the financial benefits that accompany deployment. As with many of the impacts of OPTEMPO, the meaningfulness of the missions that officers are engaged in is a highly subjective judgment. There are numerous indicators that SF missions have become increasingly valued by members of the defense community. Since 9/11, Special Operations Forces have seen their manning, budget, and mission expand significantly in order to address the challenges of the global war on terror

⁵¹ It is highly probable that SF deployments are more predictable than conventional Army deployments for more reasons than just their length. Since 2003, SF has essentially divided OEF and OIF responsibilities between its five operational groups, with two groups primarily responsible for OEF and a different two groups responsible for OIF. The remaining group, and the two National Guard groups, are used as augmentation for both as well as other non-Middle East commitments. Given that SF officers generally return to the same group they were assigned to as captains, an SF officer generally knows where his area of deployment emphasis will be for a large portion of his career.

⁵² Linnington.

(GWOT).⁵³ However, ample information also exists that highlight the importance of conventional Army officers in today's operational environment.⁵⁴ Ultimately, an officer's perception of the value of SF missions, as compared to those of the branch he is in, comes down to his judgment based on the information available. So while mission satisfaction may in fact be critical to SF's recruiting success, it is not clearly demonstrated by the literature examined in this chapter. However, this topic will be examined in greater detail in Chapter III.

The second positive benefit repeatedly associated with high OPTEMPO is financial gain. Since the beginning of OEF, the Army has steadily increased the financial benefits of deployment,⁵⁵ offering increasingly lucrative options to specifically encourage junior officers to extend their service obligations. These options include such offers as fully funded graduate school, duty assignment of choice, and, for many officers in high-demand branches, cash bonuses of up to \$35,000.⁵⁶ SF offers no financial incentives to officers to encourage volunteers. However, SF volunteers have not been prohibited from benefiting from Army incentive offers.⁵⁷ While these incentives may

⁵³ For a discussion of SOF expanded manning, funding and missions see Greg Jaffe, "Rumsfeld Aims to Elevate Role of Special Forces," *The Wall Street Journal Online*, 18 February 2006, http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB114020280689677176-Uxax19bikHEgsAEAcgUHVva5VD6E_20070217.html?mod=rss_free.

⁵⁴ For an example of this assertion see Babak Dehghanpisheh and Evan Thomas, "Scions of the surge: Five Years On, the War is Transforming the American Officer Corps," *Newsweek*, 24 March 2008, <http://www.newsweek.com/id/123475>.

⁵⁵ The last five years have seen increases in incentive pays for hostile duty and family separation, life insurance and death gratuity payments for service members who are killed, tax breaks for service in specific combat zones, and even bonuses for involuntary extensions of deployment.

⁵⁶ See U.S. Army Human Resources Command (HRC), "MILPER MESSAGE 07-237: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ARMY OFFICER MENU OF INCENTIVES PROGRAM (REGULAR ARMY)" (11 September 2007), <http://PERSCOMND04.ARMY.MIL/MILPERmsgs.nsf/All+Documents/07-237?OpenDocument>. See also HRC, "MILPER MESSAGE NUMBER 08-093: FY 2008/2009 OFFICER MENU OF INCENTIVES PROGRAM" (1 April 2008), <http://PERSCOMND04.ARMY.MIL/MILPERmsgs.nsf/All+Documents/08-093?OpenDocument>.

⁵⁷ See MILPER Message 07-237 and 08-093. These messages outline tiers of bonuses, based on the *initial* branch of commission that can total up to \$35,000. Neither of these messages stipulates that an officer must still be in the initial commissioning branch to qualify for the bonus. None of the other incentives offered in these messages are limited by branch of commission.

encourage officers to stay in the Army, thereby indirectly benefiting SF recruiting by providing a larger pool of potential recruits, they do not directly encourage officers to volunteer for SF.

3. Implications for the Future

This thesis asserts that SF's ability to reduce the negative impacts of high OPTEMPO through its deployment structure, as compared to the deployment structure of the conventional Army, has had a significant positive impact on increased officer recruitment. However, the current deployment structures of both SF and the conventional Army are not written in stone. OPTEMPO in Iraq appears particularly uncertain. With the U.S. presidential election rapidly approaching, the two parties' major candidates have vastly different opinions on Iraq. In addition, the Army is currently authorized to grow its end strength. A larger Army would potentially enable greater time between deployments for units, assuming troop commitments either remain constant or decrease.⁵⁸ At the same time, there may be no relief in sight for SF's current OPTEMPO.⁵⁹

If the current OPTEMPO rates and deployment structure remain relatively consistent, it is probable that SF will continue to meet its officer recruitment goals. However, several conditions could emerge that may cause SF to have difficulty meeting those goals. First, a substantive reduction in either the amount or length of conventional Army deployments could reduce SF's ability to offset the negative impacts of OPTEMPO. Second, an altering of the incentives structure for junior officers that excludes SF officers could also lead to fewer recruits. Should either of these conditions emerge, SF should examine what changes it could make to either reduce the negative impacts or enhance the positive benefits associated with OPTEMPO.

⁵⁸ This growth may have positive and negative aspects itself. While it could relieve OPTEMPO stress, it may also be the primary factor behind the current shortage of senior captains and junior majors in the Army. See Henning, 12.

⁵⁹ Admiral Eric T. Olson, Commander U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) made this point to members of the House Armed Service Committee in his testimony on 5 March 2008. "USSOCOM anticipates no relief from our deployed commitments," Olson stated, "even when U.S. force levels in Iraq and Afghanistan are reduced." See Eric T. Olson, Admiral, Commander U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), prepared statement before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats, and Capabilities, 5 March 2008, http://armedservices.house.gov/calendar_past_hearings.shtml.

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III. EXPOSURE

A. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter showed that the current structure of SF deployments appears to have a favorable impact on SF officer recruiting. SF's OPTEMPO structure may not be the only aspect of the current operational environment that is favorably impacting officer recruitment for SF. Multiple SF officers have suggested that one of the most beneficial aspects of the current operational environment is that conventional Army soldiers and officers are increasingly exposed to SF personnel.⁶⁰

Equity Theory, as explained in Chapter II, supports the position that increased exposure to SF personnel may be an important factor for SF recruiting. Increased exposure to information on SF has the potential to increase the rate at which officers perceive inequity between their current branch and SF. However, increased exposure has a chance of discouraging officers from volunteering for SF, if it reduces the amount of inequity an officer perceives. Therefore, increased exposure would only have a positive impact on SF recruiting if the information provided by this exposure is positive to SF. Equity Theory has two additional aspects that are important when discussing exposure as a potential explanation for SF's increased officer recruiting success. First, as an officer's perceived inequity between his branch and SF increases, so will his desire to volunteer for SF.⁶¹ Second, if an officer does not act on his perceived inequity, it may diminish over time.⁶² Therefore, it appears that the length and timing of exposure to SF may also matter.

⁶⁰The Commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB) expressed this sentiment directly, stating that "the favorable impact of the GWOT [Global War on Terror] has been the [sic] regular Army gets to see ARSOF [Army Special Operations Forces] firsthand and many Soldiers find it appealing." Commander, U.S. Army Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB), email correspondence with author 23 April 2007.

⁶¹ Adams, 280-283; and Elaine Walster, et al., 6.

⁶² Michael R. Carrell and John E. Ditttrich, "Equity Theory: The Recent Literature, Methodological Considerations and New Directions," *The Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 3, number 000002, (April 1978), 204-205.

This chapter examines the impact of exposure on SF officer recruitment. It demonstrates the multiple ways exposure has increased in the post-9/11 period and discusses which of these increases appears to have the most impact on SF officer recruitment. It examines whether or not the information provided by this exposure is positive to SF and therefore beneficial to SF recruitment. Finally, it examines the impacts of length and timing of exposure on officer recruitment.

In order to address these questions, this chapter will rely heavily on interviews and focus groups conducted by the author with multiple key groups of officers and NCOs: SF officers in the operational force, SF recruiters, SF branch managers, and officers who have recently volunteered for SF. Detailed information on these interviews and focus groups can be found in Appendix A. Unless otherwise noted, the information provided in this chapter is drawn from the interviews described in Appendix A.

B. INCREASING EXPOSURE

1. Formal Recruiters

The post-9/11 period has seen a growth in the exposure of conventional Army soldiers to SF soldiers in many ways. One of the most visible is the establishment of the Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB) at Fort Bragg, NC. The formal recruiting structure for SF has evolved multiple times since the establishment of SF as a branch in the 1987. The first formal organization, solely within U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC), charged with recruiting soldiers for SF was established in 1990.⁶³ This organization evolved over time to become the Special Operations Recruiting Company (SORC). The organization of the SORC is shown in Figure 4. The SORC brought all SF recruiting detachments under one commander and was charged with recruiting for both SF officer and enlisted ranks. The SORC was lead by SF officers;

⁶³Herd and Teplitzky, 2-6.

however, the vast majority of recruiters were not SF qualified.⁶⁴ The recruiters at each recruiting detachment were primarily responsible for recruiting at their installation. Recruiters did regularly traveled to installations without recruiting detachments regularly to recruit soldiers at those installations as well. While the recruiters in the SORC were familiar with SF to various degrees, multiple studies identified that they often lacked specific information sought by recruits.⁶⁵

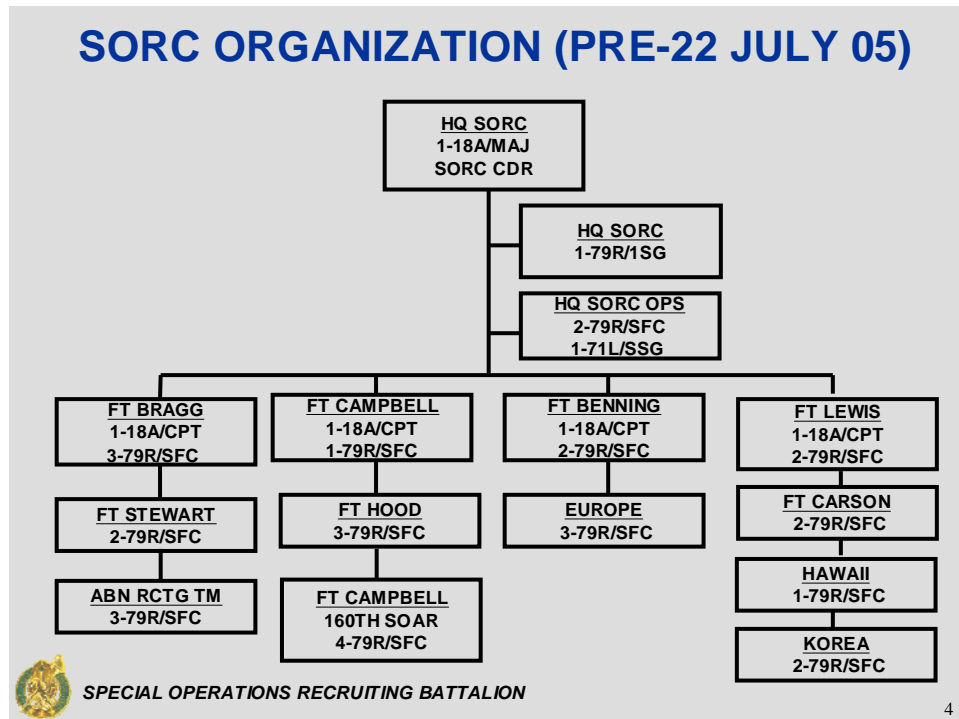


Figure 4. Special Operations Recruiting Company Organization⁶⁶

The SORC was expanded and reorganized into the Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB) in 2005. The SORB's current structure is shown in Figure 5. This

⁶⁴ The Army breaks all personnel down by Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and assigns each a two digit code followed by additional letters and numbers that further define the specialty and rank. 18 is the two digit code for SF. 79 is the two digit code for Recruiter. Soldiers from other MOSes can be assigned to recruiting duty but will retain their regular MOS code and return to duty in that MOS after his recruiting tour.

⁶⁵ See Herd and Teplitzky. See also Steven M. Swierkowski and Robert M. Burrell, "Tactics, Methods and Techniques to Improve Special Forces In-Service Enlisted Recruiting" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, June 2002).

⁶⁶ U.S. Army Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB), "SORB Information Brief," PowerPoint presentation dated 20 September 2005, provided to the author 18 April 2008.

expansion allowed the SORB to increase its persistent recruiter footprint by adding recruiting detachments to additional installations. It also increased the size of the recruiting detachments at each location. One of the most significant changes was the addition of SF qualified NCOs to each recruiting station. The authorized end strength of SF NCOs in SF recruiting rose from zero under the SORC to 15 in the SORB.

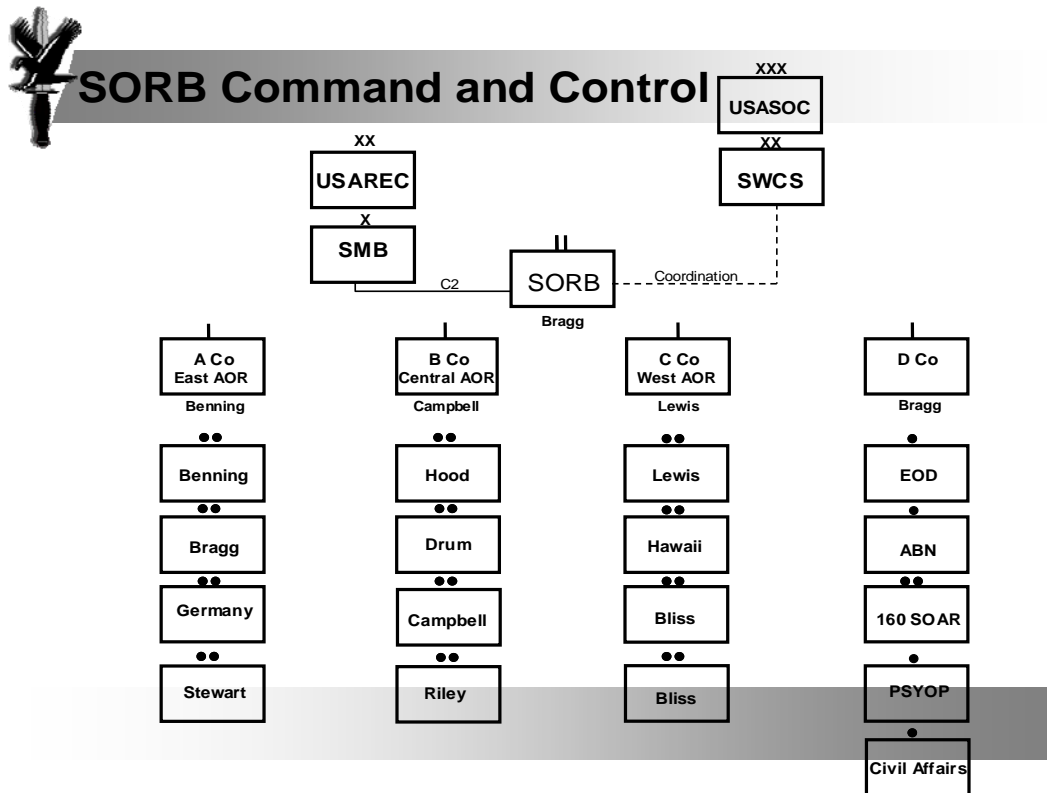


Figure 5. Special Operations Recruiting Battalion Organization.⁶⁷

These recruiting detachments are still primarily responsible for their own installation and they still travel to conduct recruiting briefs at locations that have no permanent detachments. However, this travel has increased to offset the impacts of troop deployments to OIF and OEF. SORB recruiters track Army unit deployment matrixes in order to identify when units will be deploying to or returning from OIF and OEF.

⁶⁷ U.S. Army Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB), "SORB Overview," PowerPoint presentation dated 19 November 2007, provided to the author 18 April 2008.

Recruiters from one detachment will “surge” to assist other detachments at installations with a large number of returning units.⁶⁸ In order to better reach redeploying soldiers, the SORB has also established a rotational presence at a major redeployment processing center in Kuwait. Additional manpower and resources have also allowed the SORB to host other events such as career fairs that increase their exposure to the general Army population as well. The growth and spread of information technology, such as email and the internet, has also enabled these recruiters to expand their reach and exposed them to more potential recruits.

The growth of the SORB has been substantial and has clearly helped increase exposure of the conventional Army to SF. It has undeniably been a key element to increasing SF volunteer rates of all ranks in the post-9/11 period. However, the SORB expansion may have impacted officer recruiting less than it has impacted enlisted recruiting. Multiple members of the SORB stated that they play a significantly less important role in the recruitment of officers than they do with enlisted soldiers. As one recruiter noted to the author, he feels he is more of a “facilitator” and “processor” than a “recruiter” when it came to officers. The general perception among recruiters is that officers gather most of the information they use to make their decision to volunteer for SF before they ever speak to a recruiter. The recruiter then helps “fill in the gaps” if questions remain. Many of these questions relate to procedural issues such as what goes in a volunteer packet or when will orders be sent for SFAS. They noted that many officers never even visit a recruiting station, relying on emails and phone calls (often from deployed locations) to submit their volunteer paperwork. These recruiters’ perceptions were validated by recent volunteers for SF. Only one officer of the eleven recent SF volunteers interviewed by the author had ever attended an SF information brief hosted by the SORB although most had received assistance from the SORB to process

⁶⁸ This timing is critical from a practical standpoint. Recruiters cannot recruit soldiers within 90 days of deployment, during deployment, and for 45 days post deployment. Therefore recruiters have a very small time window in which to recruit soldiers, given most units are experiencing only one year between each deployment.

their volunteer packets. So while the SORB recruiters serve the essential function of processing officer volunteers for SF, they appear to have less impact on convincing them to volunteer in the first place.

2. Informal Recruiters

Both recruiters and officers identified a varied list of personnel who were instrumental in persuading officers to volunteer for SF. This thesis will refer to this group as informal recruiters. These informal recruiters are not only far more numerous than formal recruiters, they appear to have much more influence on an officers decision to volunteer for SF.

A repeatedly identified group of informal recruiters is SF personnel assigned as cadre to USMA or ROTC programs. Half of the volunteers interviewed cited these instructors as their first experience with SF personnel and often credited these SF officers and NCOs with instilling in them the desire to volunteer for SF. SF volunteers generally describe these informal recruiters as indirect in their influence. These SF cadre members did not try to directly persuade them to volunteer for SF, rather they created a highly favorable impression of SF through the qualities they displayed as leaders and instructors. SF officers currently serving at USMA explained to the author that they are well aware that their performance directly impacts young cadets' opinions of SF. They also explained that they are routinely asked about their experiences and opinions of SF, both in the classroom by their students and outside of the classroom by cadets who sought them out to gather information on SF.

These SF instructors have the opportunity to reach hundreds of potential officer recruits. USMA instructors estimate that they each teach over 100 cadets a year and interact with at least another 100 cadets outside of the classroom in various training events. ROTC instructors' impact varies by the size of the program. This group of informal recruiters has been in place since well before 9/11. However, due to the high demand for SF personnel to serve in operational billets in the post-9/11 period, these types of assignments are classified as a low priority to fills. This has increased the

likelihood that these cadre billets will be filled by an officer or NCO from another branch. It is also important to point out that there are no SF officers or NCOs assigned to OCS, which as Chapter IV will discuss, will grow significantly over the next five years.

Another influential group of informal recruiters identified by recent volunteers is their own peers. Volunteering for SF is a significant career decision for a young officer. It is very common to hear from young officers that they were discouraged initially from volunteering for SF by their chain of command or received negative treatment from their chain of command after they formally volunteered for SF. Many young officers are therefore more comfortable seeking input and guidance from their peers. Both recruiters and volunteers noted that it is not uncommon to see clusters of volunteers from the same unit, which some attributed to this peer influence effect.

The opportunity for the impact of peer influence has risen in the post-9/11 period. After an officer volunteers for SF and is selected by the ARSOF Board for attendance at SFAS, he is sent to Ft. Bragg in a temporary duty (TDY) status. This is a volunteer's first stop in the SF training pipeline. Before the dynamic OPTEMPO environment of the post-9/11 period, officers were often sent TDY while enroute to their attendance at the Captain's Career Course (CCC). The officer never returned the unit they had come from, regardless of whether they were selected for attendance at the SFQC or not. If they successfully completed SFAS, they would attend the CCC and then attend the SFQC. If not selected for SFQC, they would attend the CCC and go on to a follow on assignment in their original branch. Today, often due to deployment schedules and limited availability of seats at the CCC, officers are generally sent TDY to SFAS and then return to their original unit, regardless of whether they were selected for the SFQC or not. This presents an increased opportunity for these officers to influence their peers, positively or negatively, based on their experiences at SFAS. Recent volunteers for SF also noted that peers who were not selected for SFAS attendance by the ARSOF board (roughly 20 percent of volunteers in YG 2005) may also attempt to influence their peers, who were selected, not to attend SFAS.

The group of informal recruiters that is universally identified as having the most significant impact on SF recruiting in the post-9/11 period is SF personnel in operational

units. Recruiters and volunteers alike tell numerous stories of the influence of SF personnel. Recruiters note that Ft. Bragg, NC habitually produces the highest number of SF volunteers. They attribute this, in no small measure, to the fact that Ft. Bragg has a larger number of SF personnel than any other Army installation. It is common for officers and enlisted soldiers in the conventional Army units at Ft. Bragg to meet and interact with SF personnel, not only in work related situations, but also off-duty in any of a number of environments such as housing areas, children's schools, church or other social activities. Volunteers tell even more compelling stories of the influence of SF personnel they met while on deployment. Every officer interviewed had some level of contact with SF personnel while deployed to OIF or OEF. One volunteer recounted his unit's experience in OEF. Three of the four lieutenants that shared a firebase with an SF detachment in his unit's area of responsibility returned from deployment and volunteered for SF.

This group of informal recruiters not only appears to be the most effective, but also the largest in the post-9/11 period. This is due to the increased deployments of SF personnel in conjunction with largely conventional Army operations. As discussed in Chapter II, SF personnel have historically had high deployment rates. However, most of these deployments were not in conjunction with conventional Army operations. Today, over 170,000 members of the U.S. military are deployed to OIF and OEF, with the vast majority being from the Army. SF's deployment priorities are mirroring this priority as well. Prior to 9/11, 20 percent of deployments of all Special Operations Forces (SOF), of which SF is the largest group, were to the Middle East. Today 80 percent of all SOF deployments are to the Middle East.⁶⁹ Not only are SF units working alongside conventional units at a higher rate than in the past, in some cases conventional officers and NCOs are working directly with or for SF officers. According to SF branch managers at HRC, SF personnel are increasingly assigned to transition teams (TTs) in Iraq and Afghanistan. These teams place officers and NCOS of varying branches together in small

⁶⁹ Eric T. Olson, Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), as cited in Robert Burns, "4-Star: Spec Ops need in Iraq Likely to Rise," *Army Times*, 7 May 2008, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/05/ap_olson_specops_050508/.

units to work with host nation forces. One officer interviewed attributed his decision to volunteer for SF directly to his experience working for an SF officer on a TT.

3. Linkages between the Formal and the Informal

Despite the important role played by both formal and informal recruiters, the communication linkages between the two appear episodic. Individual recruiters, especially those located at installations that are also home to SF units, often talk with SF personnel. Prior to the establishment of the rotating recruiting presence in Kuwait, some recruiters spoke with deploying SF units in order to provide these SF units with recruiter contact information should they meet conventional Army officers and soldiers who were interested in SF. Some informal recruiters have also reached out to the SORB in order to gather the latest information on volunteering for SF. The author noted that a small number of the over 1,300 volunteer packets reviewed for this thesis included letters of recommendation from SF officers even though letters of recommendation are not a required. SF branch officers at HRC also discuss officer recruiting as they visit operational SF units. So while communication does take place between these two important groups, it appears to be driven by individuals. It does not appear to be routinized in a systematic way to connect a maximum number of people.

C. INFORMATION

It is clear that conventional Army soldiers and officers are increasingly exposed to SF in the post-9/11 period, both through formal and informal recruiters. This increased exposure, however, does not guarantee a positive effect on SF recruiting. It must be assumed that increased exposure only has a positive effect on SF recruiting when it provides information that causes potential recruits to view SF more positively than their

current branch.⁷⁰ There may be numerous, highly individualistic, reasons that shape an officer's view of SF. Given the high rate of OPTEMPO that dominates the current operational environment, this thesis will focus on information provided by formal and informal recruiters on the four major impacts of OPTEMPO identified in Chapter II. As noted in Chapter II, this thesis contends that as officers perceive SF to produce more positive outcomes or to lower the negative outcomes of OPTEMPO than their current branch, they are more likely to volunteer for SF. The information provided to these officers by informal and formal recruiters is essential to this perception.

1. Positive Impacts – Mission Satisfaction and Financial Gain

Greater mission satisfaction is the answer most commonly cited to the question of why officers choose to volunteer for SF. This answer was consistent across every group of individuals interviewed by the author. The specific aspects of what constituted greater mission satisfaction, however, varied from individual to individual. Commonly cited aspects of SF that volunteers and both formal and informal recruiters alike identified include: increased flexibility, better resources, better training, more authority and responsibility, more opportunity to work with high quality soldiers, and more unit cohesion. While SF recruiters specifically discuss the increased financial advantages of volunteering for SF with enlisted soldiers, they are aware that officers receive none of these financial incentives. None of the recent volunteers interviewed identified any financial benefits to volunteering for SF.

These reasons for volunteering for SF are not unique to post-9/11 period. In 1994, the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) worked in conjunction with the USAREC to develop an information booklet to assist

⁷⁰ It is also possible that information that paints a potential volunteer's current branch in a negative light could enhance an officer's perception of SF when the two are compared. It is highly probable that this occurs on a regular basis. However, the majority of the volunteers interviewed by the author did not have a negative view of their former branch, but rather they had a more positive view of SF. In fact, several of the officers expressed regret that they were unable to command accompany in their former branch since this would preclude them from volunteering for SF. Their decision to go SF was that it would ultimately be a more positive career choice. For this reason, this thesis assumes that information that is positive to SF is more important than information that denigrates other branches.

recruiters in providing potential SF volunteers with a realistic preview of life in SF.⁷¹ According to this booklet, the rewards for volunteering for SF are: “job satisfaction, training opportunities, professionalism, responsibility, and feelings of camaraderie and belonging.”⁷²

The similarity of these perceptions of mission satisfaction within SF, despite the dynamically different time periods is important. These statements indicate that, while increased mission satisfaction is the most important reason officers volunteer for SF, it may be the reason that has changed the least in the post-9/11 period. The context of the SF mission is clearly different today than it was in the 1990s, but the fundamentals of this mission that produce high mission satisfaction appear to be the same. Therefore, what changed in the post-9/11 period is not the aspects of the SF mission that may lead to increased mission satisfaction, but rather the extent to which conventional Army officers are able to observe these aspects first hand through increased exposure to SF personnel. This has implications on recruiting in the future. The consistent nature of the appeal of the SF mission over time tends to indicate that, even if the nature of the operational environment changes, the positive aspects of mission satisfaction experienced by SF officers may not. Just as these aspects were identified before the GWOT began, they are likely to be identified after the GWOT ends. Therefore the challenge for future SF recruiting will not be how to improve the perception of the SF mission, but rather how to expose conventional officers to it.

2. Negative Impacts – Family Impacts and Work Overload

While mission satisfaction was the most important reason identified for officers to volunteer, SF’s ability to reduce the negative impacts of the current OPTEMPO environment was also cited repeatedly as a significant factor in the increase of SF officer volunteers. According to both recruiters and recent volunteers, SF’s OPTEMPO is a

⁷¹ Judith E. Brooks and Wayne E. Evans, *Evaluation of a Realistic Job Preview for U.S. Army Special Forces* (Alexandria: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, August 1996), v.

⁷² U.S. Army Recruiting Command, “Thinking About SF: Answers to Often Asked Questions” (1994), 7.

significant concern among potential recruits. While high OPTEMPO may no longer be a barrier to entry that it appeared to be in the pre-9/11 period, officers habitually want to know what SF's OPTEMPO is like before volunteering. Interestingly enough, some officers expressed that their greatest concern with volunteering for SF today was not the OPTEMPO rate of SF, but was the fact that they would have to spend a year to eighteen months in SF training before they could return to an operational unit while their conventional Army peers were heading directly into operational units deploying overseas. Nevertheless, even these officers acknowledge that the current OPTEMPO environment is extremely stressful.

The current briefing presented by SF recruiters to officers and enlisted personnel highlights multiple aspects of SF that serve to reduce the negative impacts of OPTEMPO, as shown in Figure 6. SORB recruiters also note that interested soldiers and officers routinely bring their wives to recruiting briefs. A former SF recruiting company commander noted that he routinely offered to put wives of potential volunteers in touch with wives of current SF personnel so they could get answers to their questions directly from a spouse, rather than a recruiter. Informal recruiters identify many of these same features of SF life to interested officers. Both formal and informal recruiters expressed the belief that SF's shorter deployment structure was beneficial to recruiting today.

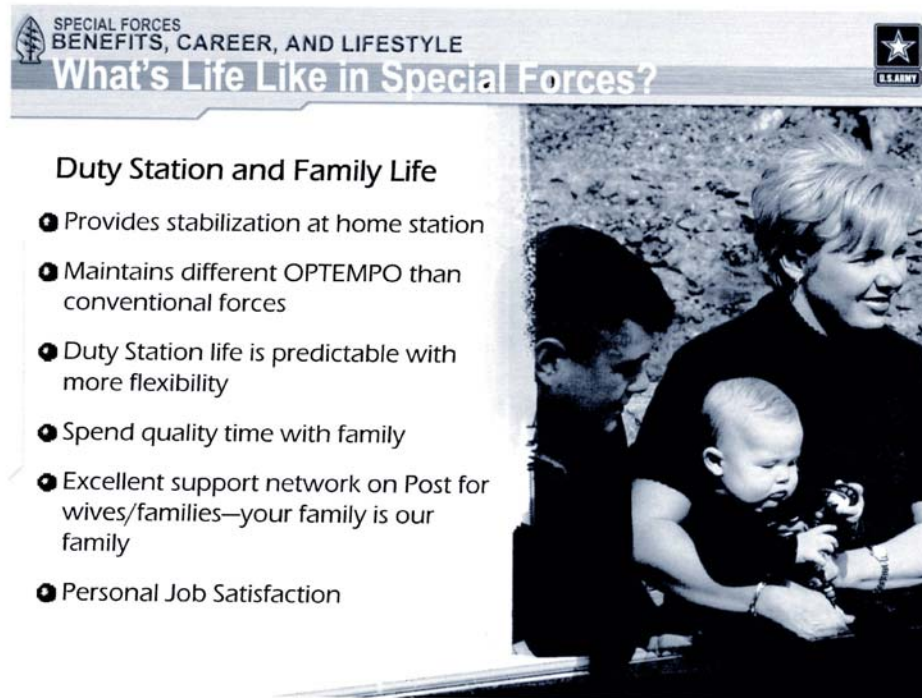


Figure 6. SORB Slide on SF Family Life.⁷³

Recent volunteers for SF also identified SF's ability to offset the negative impacts of high OPTEMPO as contributing reasons for volunteering for SF. Every officer interviewed by the author was keenly aware of SF's deployment structure. Many noted that they had witnessed this first hand, as one SF unit in their area of responsibility completed its entire deployment and was replaced by another SF unit during the span of their conventional Army unit's single twelve to fifteen month deployment. Recent SF volunteers identified other aspects of SF that they felt reduced the negative impacts of OPTEMPO on their family life as well. These officers stated that their former branches are under tremendous stress to respond to demands for forces in OIF and OEF. For this reason, many of their peers in their former branches receive little notice prior to assignments and are often sent to assignments they do not want based on the needs of the Army. In contrast, officers who volunteer and are selected for SF are able to input their

⁷³ U.S. Army Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB), "Special Forces Recruiting," PowerPoint presentation, provided to the author 18 April 2008.

assignments preferences and receive notification of their follow on SF assignments before they even attended the SFQC. This provides them a far greater sense of predictability and stability. Two officers interviewed related that classmates in their CCC class requested out of year group waivers to volunteer for SF after seeing the manner in which SF branch managers worked with officers in comparison to their own branch.

SF's ability to offset the negative aspects of OPTEMPO may be a temporary condition. While the fundamentals of mission satisfaction appear consistent in the pre and post-9/11 period, SF's ability to offset the negative impacts of OPTEMPO in the post-9/11 period is vastly different when compared to the pre-9/11 period. The amount of exposure between SF and conventional forces today helps highlight SF's ability to reduce the negative impacts of OPTEMPO, and is therefore a significant boost to SF recruiting. However, a significant reduction in the negative impacts of the OPTEMPO environment on conventional forces in the future may not be able to be offset by increased exposure to SF.

D. LENGTH AND TIMING OF EXPOSURE

1. Length of Exposure

Interviews with recruiters and recent volunteers were inconclusive as to the whether an increase in the length of exposure to SF increases the likelihood that an officer will volunteer. However, it would seem intuitive that the longer a person is exposed to positive information on SF, the more likely he is to volunteer. One observation from recent volunteers appears to support this notion. Fifty percent of the volunteers interviewed stated that SF cadre members at USMA or ROTC were their first experience with SF. Most of these officers also stated that they had decided to volunteer for SF well before the recruiting window opened for their year group. This was not true of officers who were exposed to SF personnel closer to or during their recruiting window. This observation alone is not enough to make a definitive conclusion of the impact of exposure length, however, it does further support the importance of informal recruiters

2. Timing of Exposure

The interviews conducted do not offer enough evidence to conclusively determine the impacts of timing of exposure to SF personnel on officer recruitment.⁷⁴ However, one significant concern of SF recruiters, SF branch managers and USAJKFSWCS may indicate that timing of exposure matters for officers. This issue is a high “no-show” rate at SFAS.⁷⁵

Officers have a set time window in which to submit their volunteer packet. From the time that an officer’s year group enters its window for recruiting until the submission of his completed volunteer packet, he is primarily a recruiter’s responsibility. Once an officer completes this packet, he must wait for the ARSOF board to meet to determine whether or not he will be selected to attend SFAS. During this time, there are few reasons for a recruiter to interact with an officer. Once selected for attendance at SFAS, all officers coordinate with SF branch at HRC for scheduling attendance. The SF accessions and training officer at HRC must attempt to schedule SFAS attendance while an officer is not deployed. Dependant on an individual’s deployment schedule, an officer may wait a year between volunteering for SF and actually attending SFAS. The accessions and training officer is responsible for all officer volunteers awaiting attendance at SFAS and all the officers in the various stages of the SF training pipeline. This can which can easily amount to over 500 officers. Given the number of officers he is responsible for, this officer is unable to spend a significant amount of time corresponding with a volunteer.

⁷⁴ Recruiters clearly believe that timing of exposure plays an important role in enlisted recruiting. Recruiters work diligently to send qualified enlisted soldiers to SFAS as soon as possible after they have volunteered for SF (generally 60-90 days later). A primary driver for sending recruiters to Kuwait was in order to contact potential volunteers “while there interest is the highest.” This interest is often a direct result of interaction with SF soldiers on deployment. Recruiters know that the longer an enlisted soldier waits before he attends SFAS, the less likely he is to go, indicating that exposure timing is clearly an issue. The process for an officer volunteer is different and therefore less conclusive.

⁷⁵ This issue is of particular concern because the Army G-1 imposes a cap on how many officers SF may send to SFAS. In FY 2008 the cap was 385 officers (of the over 500 volunteers). Every officer who is selected for attendance at SFAS and fails to go uses an allocation against this cap that could have been given to another officer. There is no standby list to fill empty slots and officers not selected for attendance at SFAS, typically, are not allowed to volunteer again.

Therefore, the time between when an officer submits his volunteer packet and attends SFAS may be the time he has the least amount of exposure from formal recruiters. Volunteers are most likely to decline to attend SFAS when they actually receive their orders for SFAS. Since this is generally while an officer is not deployed, it may also be the time he has the least amount of exposure to informal recruiters as well. Recent volunteers state that this period of time is when other influencers (chains of command, wives, peers, and civilian employment) may be actively working to dissuade officers from following through with SFAS. They also stated that their peers (and in some cases themselves) turned in volunteer packets by the submission deadline in order to keep their SF option open. They did not fully decide to go through with volunteering until later. So not only may this be the time when volunteers have the least amount of exposure to formal or informal recruiters, it may also be the time that they are making their final decision on whether SF is what they want to do in the Army.

This does not conclusively indicate that SFAS “no-shows” are the result of a drop in exposure to SF at a critical time, however, the actions taken by the SORB, HRC and USAJFKSWCS to attempt to reduce this “no-show” rate indicates they believe exposure timing is an important factor. In order to attempt to reduce the “no show” rate, HRC and USAJFKSWCS are now sending periodic emails to officers between the time they are selected by the ARSOF board and the time they attend SFAS. These emails contain letters from various SF senior leaders (including the USAJFKSWCS Commanding General) and general information on SF and SF training. One purpose of these emails is to “maintain contact with...officers as they wait to attend SFAS.”⁷⁶ According to the SF branch chief at USAJFKSWCS Directorate of Special Operations Proponency (DSOP) who sends these emails, approximately a third of the officers who receive these letters respond. One common response is, generally, “thanks for the email, I was beginning to think SF had forgotten me.”

⁷⁶ U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Centers and School (USAJFKSWCS) Directorate of Special Operations Proponency (DSOP), “Campaign plan to reduce the Captain no-show rate to Special Forces Assessment and Selection,” information paper, 22 June 2007, provided to the author 18 April 2008. HRC also initiated a policy in April 2007 requiring an officer to sign a letter of intent to attend SFAS if selected. This is intended to reduce the number of officers who are undecided from submitting packets. This letter of intent is intended to reduce no-shows by 5 percent, while the email campaign is targeted at reducing the rate 10 percent.

IV. OFFICER ACCESSIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

Chapter II examined OPTEMPO and presented a relationship among deployment length, the negative impacts of deployment, and the positive impact of deployment. Chapter III found that exposure to SF had a positive impact as well. The Army is taking major steps that could alter both of these factors in the future. The primary long-term solution to reducing the rate of OPTEMPO for the Army is to expand the force. Growing the Army has become a significant priority in the post-9/11 period. The Army has pursued many ways to grow: through the transformation and expansion of brigade combat teams, converting administrative billets into combat skills billets, and reducing the numbers of instructors in the various training units.⁷⁷ These actions have produced expansion on the margins, but the bulk of the Army's growth has occurred through increasing the Army's authorized end strength. In 2004 the Army began an authorized temporary increase of 30,000 soldiers (for a total of 512,400 soldiers) that was to be accomplished by 2007.⁷⁸ As the U.S. Army's commitments in OIF and OEF expanded, this authorization was increased and made permanent. Thus, the Army is now authorized to grow again to 547,000 total soldiers, an expansion initially planned to be accomplished by 2012, but accelerated to 2010 by the Secretary of Defense in late 2007.⁷⁹

Naturally, the expansion has increased the requirement for officers, which has presented the Army some challenges. As of January 2007, Army estimates identified a shortfall of over 3,000 officers, predominately at the senior captain and junior major levels, beginning in 2007 and running through 2013.⁸⁰ This shortage is impacted by multiple factors, such as the under-production of officers in the mid 1990s and the

⁷⁷ Thomas Shanker, "Army's Plan for Growth Is Adequate, Secretary Says," *New York Times*, 7 October 2005, http://www.nytimes.com/2005/10/07/politics/07army.html?_r=1&oref=slogin.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "Faster Army Expansion Plan Approved," *New York Times*, 10 October 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/10/washington/10army.html?ref=washington>.

⁸⁰ GAO, *Military Personnel*, 7.

Army's expansion plans. These plans, combined with the Army's reconfiguration of the brigade combat teams, have disproportionately impacted the senior captain and junior major ranks.⁸¹ In order to close this gap, the Army is taking two major actions: it is attempting both to produce more officers than it has in the past and to retain these officers at higher than normative rates.⁸²

This chapter examines demographic data derived from various sources on the changes taking place in Army accessions, so as to determine if and how these changes may impact future SF officer recruitment.⁸³ Specifically, it examines four main areas: changes in sources of commission (SOC), changes in the distribution of officers by branch, changes in the ages of officers, and changes in officers' marital status. These areas are important for various reasons to SF recruiting. Anecdotal evidence indicates that Officer Candidate School (OCS) officers are less likely to volunteer for SF than officers from other sources of commission. A significant rise in the number of officers produced by OCS could therefore hamper SF officer recruiting. Combat arms officers have historically been both the largest number of officers commissioned and the largest number of SF volunteers. A change in these dynamics could also indicate potential challenges for SF recruiting. Existing studies show that two significant concerns of enlisted soldiers considering SF are the physical demands of the training and separation from family.⁸⁴ If officers share these concerns, older and married officers may tend to volunteer less. After determining the changes and impact of these changes on SF officer recruitment, the thesis proposes an expected value model for predicting plausible future outcomes for SF officer recruitment.

⁸¹ Henning, 4-7.

⁸² Policy Analyst, Army G-1, 10 April 2008.

⁸³ A detailed discussion of the data used for this chapter, to include range, sources, and limitations is included in Appendix B.

⁸⁴ Herd and Teplitzky, 24.

B. ACCESSIONS

1. Sources of Commission and Branch

The Army has three primary SOC's: the U.S. Military Academy (USMA) at West Point, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at over 250 colleges and universities, and OCS at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Officers from USMA and most ROTC programs receive their commissions after four years at their respective institutions; OCS officers are either selected directly from the Army enlisted ranks or enlist in the Army under the OCS enlistment option.⁸⁵ Generally, the Army attempts to maintain an equal mix of in-service OCS officers and enlistment-option OCS officers. However this mix does change at times based on need.⁸⁶ Training at OCS is fourteen weeks long and therefore can produce officers much faster than either USMA or ROTC programs.⁸⁷ The Army, historically, relies on USMA and ROTC to produce the preponderance of its officers. But because these programs require four years to produce officers, they are unable to rapidly adjust to changes in demands for officers. Therefore, the Army uses OCS to offset gaps produced by USMA and ROTC commissioning.⁸⁸

Given the Army's growth requirements in the post-9/11 period and the pace at which this growth is to be accomplished, the Army's use of OCS has increased. Table 1 shows both an increase in the number of officers accessed from 2000 to 2006 and an increased reliance on OCS to facilitate this growth. The future forecasts for officer growth from 2007 to 2010 show an even greater increase in the number of officers commissioned and the reliance on OCS. In order to avoid draining too many high-quality

⁸⁵ The requirements for enlisted soldiers to attend OCS are different than for those electing the OCS enlistment option. An enlisted soldier need only have 90 hours of college credit, while an enlistment-option OCS officer must have a baccalaureate degree to apply. For this reason, officers under the OCS enlistment option are often referred to as "college option" OCS officers. See the U.S. Army Human Resources Command, "U.S. Army Officer Candidate School (OCS)," <https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/active/opdistacc/OCS/COCS.htm>.

⁸⁶ Policy Analyst, Army G-1, 10 April 2008.

⁸⁷ Enlistment-option OCS officers must first attend Army basic training for 14 weeks prior to attending OCS.

⁸⁸ GAO, *Military Personnel*, 2.

soldiers and NCOs from the enlisted force, the Army will place increasing emphasis on the OCS enlistment option, increasing the percentage of enlistment-option officers to 60 percent of the total OCS production in FY 2008.⁸⁹

Year Group	USMA*	ROTC	OCS	Total
2000	908	2565	619	4092
2001	892	2411	811	4114
2002	936	2357	1004	4297
2003	848	2477	988	4313
2004	904	2729	820	4453
2005	906	2509	971	4386
2006	829	2182	1344	4355

* Includes officers accessed into the Army
from other service academies

Table 1. Officers Accessed YG 2000–2006.⁹⁰

Year Group	USMA	ROTC	OCS	Total
2007*	966	2550	1500	5016
2008	960	2190	2050	5200
2009	960	2290	2150	5400
2010	1000	2790	1710	5500

* Already commissioned, but not currently validated by DMDC

Table 2. Officer Accessions Forecasted YG 2007–2010⁹¹

Despite the change in the numbers of officers accessed and their SOC, there has been relatively little change in the distribution of these officers among the branches of the Army. Figure 7 shows the number of officers commissioned by branch for YG 2000–2006. The graph shows a relatively constant ratio of the size of each branch to the size of the Army as a whole. It also shows that the six traditional combat arms branches (Air

⁸⁹ U.S. Army G-1, “Officer Accessions and Retention Data,” PowerPoint presentation dated 7 April 2008, emailed to the author 10 April 2008.

⁹⁰ Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), “Officer Accessions Data YG 2000-2006,” emailed to the author 7 March 2008.

⁹¹ Army G-1, “Officer Accessions and Retention Data.”

Defense, Armor, Aviation, Engineer, Field Artillery, and Infantry) consistently make up the top five total commissioning branches by size.

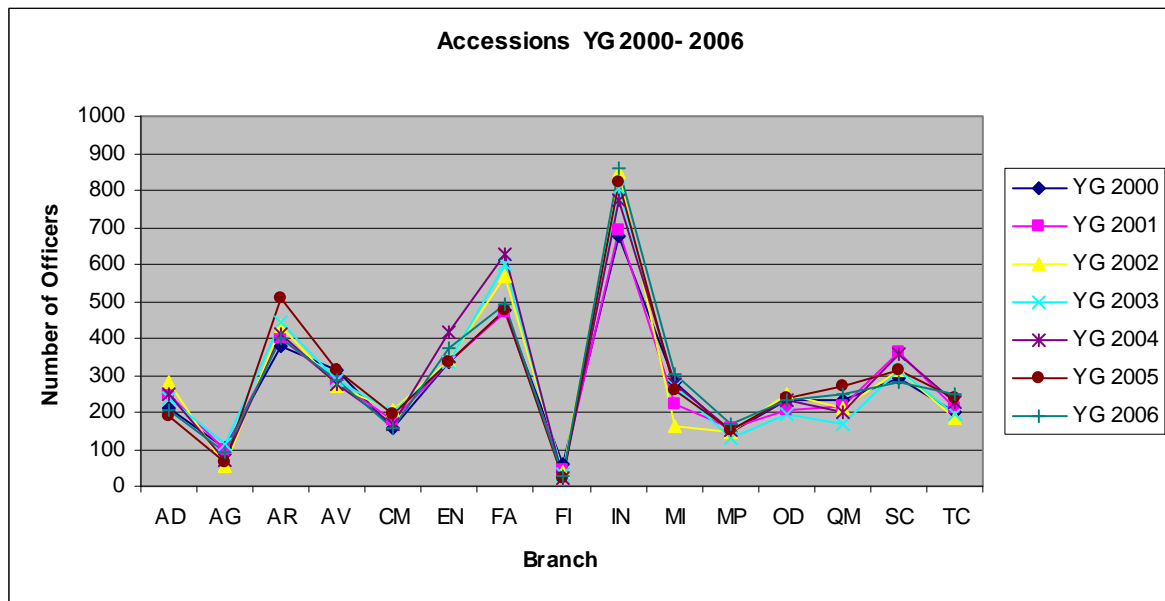


Figure 7. Officer Accessions by Branch YG 2000-2006.⁹²

While the number of officers commissioned into each branch remains relatively constant over time, the probability that an officer will enter a specific branch varies significantly based on his SOC, as seen in Figure 8. There are some significant trends to note from this graph. First, USMA graduates tend to have a higher probability of accessing into one of the combat arms branches than do ROTC or OCS graduates. Second, for each SOC, Infantry has the highest probability of any branch, which is consistent with the fact that it is the largest commissioning branch in the Army as identified in Figure 7.

⁹² DMDC.

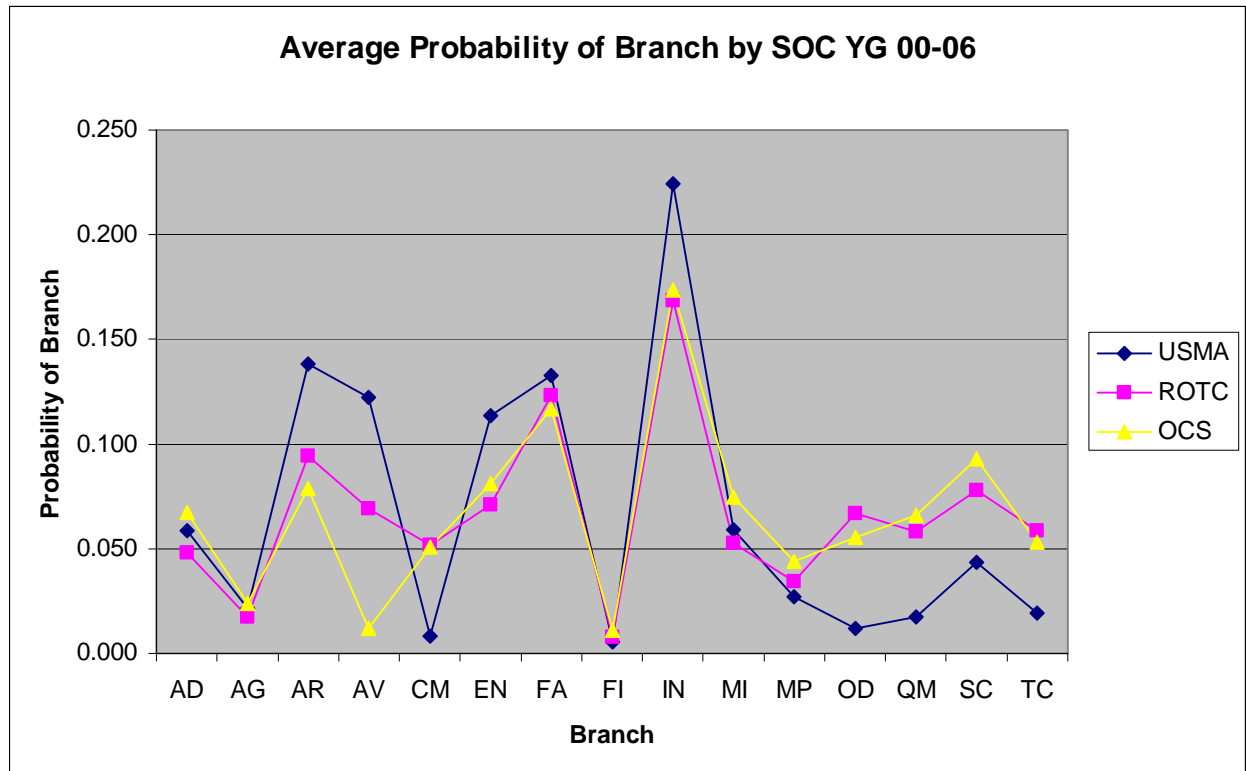


Figure 8. Average Probability of Branch by SOC YG 2000-2006.⁹³

According to the Army G-1, the growth of the officer corps will not radically alter this branching formula. The Army's intent is to maintain an equitable distribution of officers from each SOC in the various branches.⁹⁴ However, it is assumed that this equitable distribution of SOC is a secondary consideration to the total number of officers needed by each branch. It follows, that as OCS grows as a SOC, it will contribute more officers to the combat arms branches. Therefore, the relationship presented in Figure 8 will begin to look more like that relationship in Figure 7.

⁹³ DMDC.

⁹⁴ Policy Analyst, Army G-1, correspondence with the author, 2 May 2008.

2. Age and Marriage

The average age of an officer at commissioning also varies by SOC, as seen in Table 3. These differences are not unexpected given the manner in which each SOC produces officers, with USMA and ROTC officers, on average, significantly younger than OCS officers.

Year Group	USMA*	ROTC	OCS
2000	22.56	24.08	28.80
2001	22.52	24.08	28.95
2002	22.62	23.91	29.11
2003	22.07	23.91	28.47
2004	22.66	23.93	28.65
2005	22.74	23.70	28.78
2006	22.58	23.42	28.58

* Includes officers accessed into the Army
from other service academies

Table 3. Average Age at Commissioning YG 2000-2006.⁹⁵

The relationship between the age of an officer and his commissioning branch, as seen in Figure 9, shows a greater variation than the relationship between age and SOC. While the total variance in age between the various branches is relatively small in most cases, there is an observable trend. The average age for all officers commissioned in YG 2000–2006 is 24.66 years. Combat arms branches, with the exception of Air Defense, all have an average age that below this. This trend may be attributable to two factors. First, the youngest officers on average (USMA) have the highest probability to be branched into the combat arms while the oldest officers on average (OCS) often have the highest probability to be branched outside of combat arms. The age distribution in Figure 9 appears consistent with the distribution of each SOC among the branches as seen in Figure 8. Second, each commissioning source uses personnel preference to varying degrees to determine which branch an officer receives at commissioning. It is possible that younger officers may self-select into combat arms branches to a greater degree than older officers.

⁹⁵ DMDC.

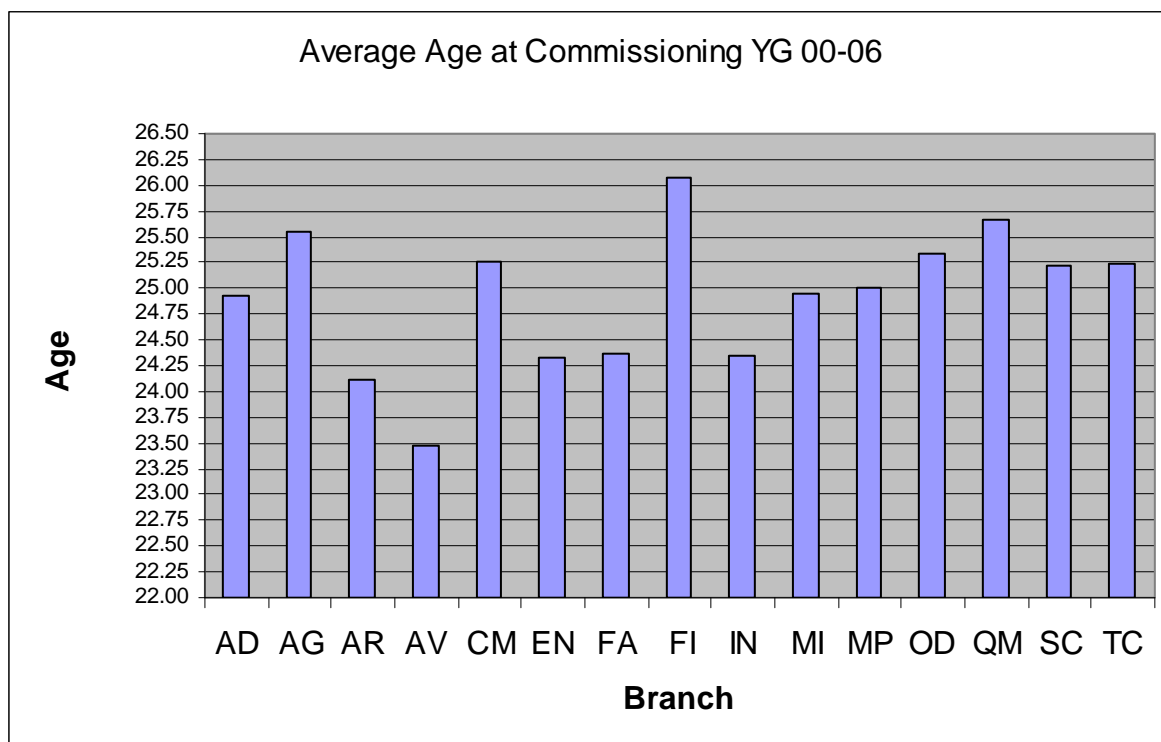


Figure 9. Average Age at Commissioning YG 2000-2006.⁹⁶

The relationship between rates of marriage for new officers and both SOC and branch are very similar to the relationship demonstrated with regard to age, as can be seen in Table 4 and Figure 10 below. Officers commissioned through OCS exhibit a much higher percentage likelihood of being married or divorced than do USMA and ROTC officers.⁹⁷ Combat arms branches also demonstrate a rate of married and divorced officers that is much lower than the average rate for YG 2000–2006 of 24.8 percent. The same two factors that may impact age distribution (the relationship of SOC and branch and self-selection) may also impact the distribution of married and divorced officers as well. One additional trend noted is the significant decline in the percentage of married and divorced OCS officers as OCS expands its production. The data available is

⁹⁶ DMDC.

⁹⁷ This thesis focuses on the rate of married and divorced officers combined, rather than on only married officers. The rationale for this comes from the assumption that divorced officers are more likely than their single peers to perceive the negative impact on a family associated with volunteering for SF. In this way they are more like married officers than single officers.

insufficient to explain this trend with any certainty; however, it is plausible that self-selection is a factor here as well. It is also plausible that the marital statistics of enlistment-option OCS officers more closely resemble the marital statistics of USMA and ROTC officers, so as their numbers increase, the marriage rates of OCS officers decline.

Year Group	USMA*	ROTC	OCS
2000	4.60%	21.30%	69.30%
2001	6.40%	20.90%	67.20%
2002	3.70%	19.20%	64.10%
2003	1.00%	16.90%	55.10%
2004	4.90%	20.70%	56.10%
2005	3.20%	18.70%	58.90%
2006	9.10%	17.70%	55.50%

*Includes officers accessed into the Army from other service academies

Table 4. Percent of Married and Divorced Officers in Commissioning YG 2000–2006.⁹⁸

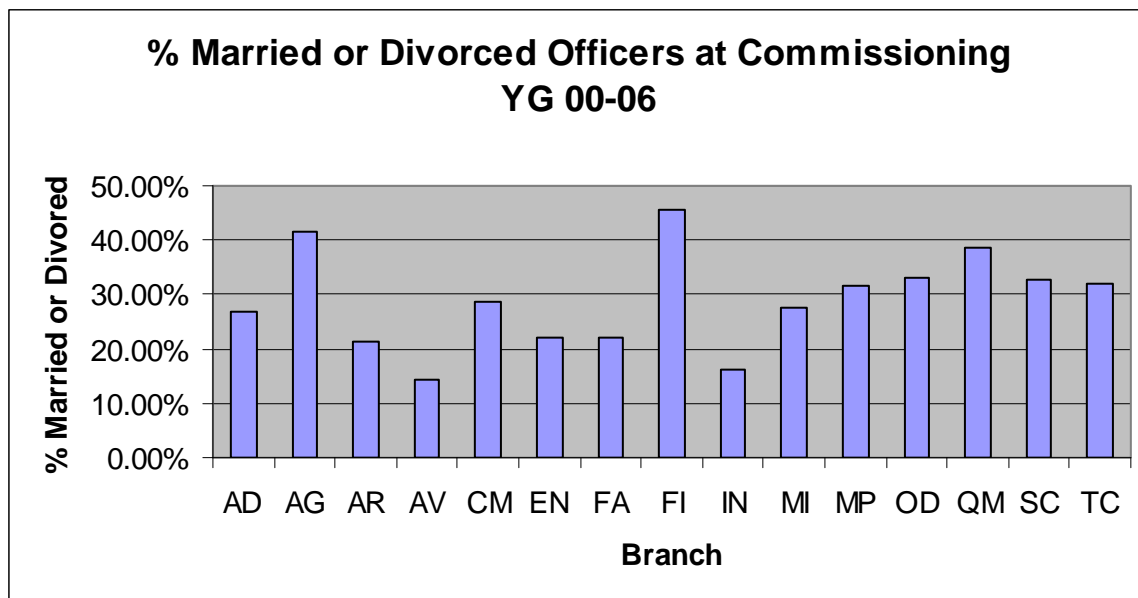


Figure 10. Percent of Married or Divorced Officers at Commissioning YG 2000–2006.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ DMDC.

⁹⁹ DMDC.

C. SPECIAL FORCES VOLUNTEERS

The previous examination of officer accessions for YG 2000–2006 demonstrates several key points for consideration when examining who volunteers for SF. While the Army is increasing the numbers of officers it commissions, and increasing its use of OCS in the process, it is not fundamentally changing the distribution of the branches within the Army. Combat arms branches are still, and will remain, the largest commissioning branches. So as OCS expands as a commissioning source, OCS officers can expect a higher probability of being branched into the combat arms in order to meet Army needs. This increase of OCS officers does not appear to have radically altered the demographic make-up of the officer corps in terms of age or marital status, especially in regard to combat arms officers. In fact, it is possible that due to self-selection, distribution, and the increase of the OCS enlistment option, OCS officers in combat arms branches more closely resemble their USMA and ROTC counterparts in terms of age and marriage than do OCS officers in non-combat arms branches. These trends are important when considering the data on who volunteers for SF.

1. Sources of Commissions and Branch

The number of officer volunteers for SF has been on a steady rise for the last three year groups eligible for recruitment (as seen in Table 5). This trend does not appear to be related simply to growth in the officer corps. The corresponding year group officer production, both in total and by SOC as shown in Table 1, are relatively stable.

Year Group	USMA*	ROTC	OCS	Total
2003	98	227	76	401
2004	91	284	69	444
2005	104	305	88	497

* Includes officers accessed into the Army
from other service academies

Table 5. Total SF Officer Volunteers YG 2003–2005.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) Directorate of Special Operations Proponency (DSOP), “Special Forces Officer Data YG 2003-2005,” provided to the author 18 April 2008.

The data in Table 5 does indicate that the hypothesis that OCS is underrepresented in SF compared to its representation in the officer corps is accurate. In YG 2003–2005, OCS officers were 17.3 percent of SF volunteers on average, and 21.1 percent of the officers accessed on average during this same time period. However, this data may be influenced by the distribution of officers among the various branches. The four largest donor branches to SF are combat arms, as seen in Figure 11. In fact, the probability that an officer from a specific branch will volunteer for SF and the probability that an officer will receive a specific branch upon commissioning appear to closely mirror each other, as seen in Figure 12. Given that combat arms branches are the largest donor branches and that OCS officers have the highest probability of being branched outside of combat arms, it stands to reason that OCS would be underrepresented as a percentage of SF volunteers. Therefore, this underrepresentation may be more closely linked to differences in SOC distribution among the branches than other factors that diminish SF's appeal to OCS officers. If this hypothesis is correct, as the percentage of OCS officers accessed into the combat arms branches increases over the next several years (as seen in Tables 1 and 2), OCS's underrepresentation will diminish as well.

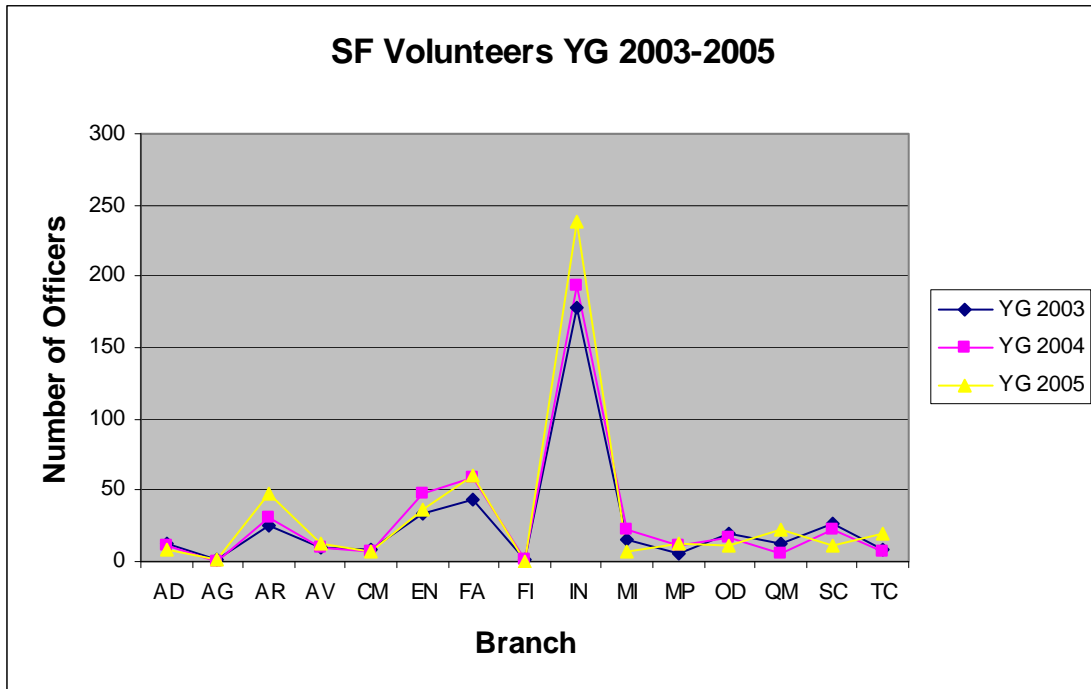


Figure 11. SF Volunteers by Branch YG 2003-2005.¹⁰¹

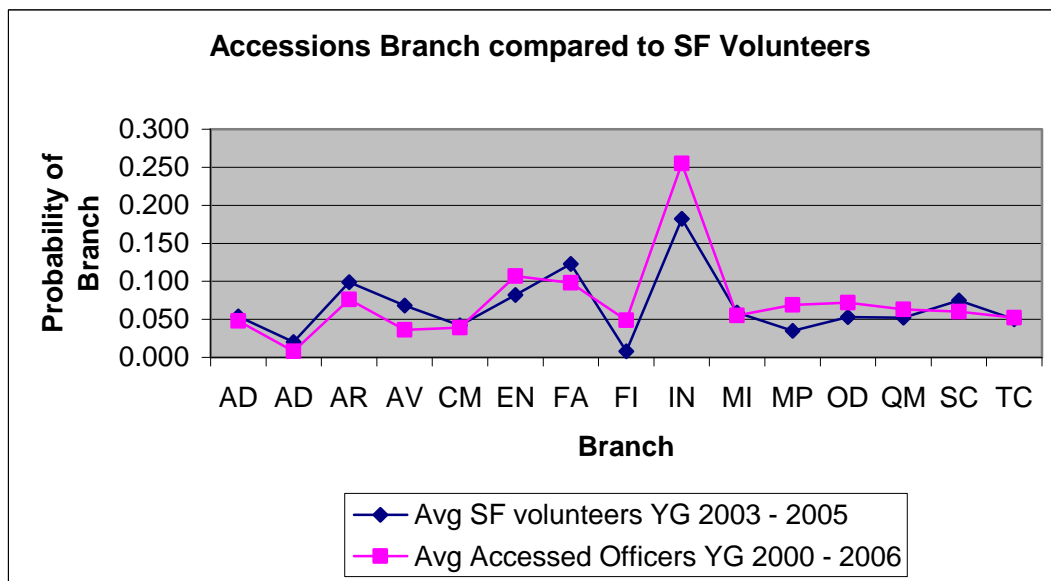


Figure 12. Probability of Accessed Branch Compared to SF Volunteers YG 2000-2006.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ USAJFKSWCS DSOP.

¹⁰² USAJFKSWCS DSOP and DMDC.

2. Age and Marriage

The relationship of age to the probability that an officer will volunteer for SF is less clear than the probability relationship of SOC or branch. Officers are not eligible to volunteer for SF until they are promotable to captain, which generally is around the 36-month mark in commissioned service. Therefore, an officer would be, on average, three years older when he volunteers for SF than when he commissioned. The average age of SF volunteers, as reflected in Table 6, shows this to be the case. This data clearly supports the contention that OCS officers who volunteer for SF are older on average than their USMA and ROTC peers. However, the data does not strongly indicate that age is a barrier to entry for OCS officers. If age were a significant barrier to entry for SF, it would stand to reason that younger OCS officers (those who more closely resemble USMA and ROTC officers in age) would volunteer for SF in greater numbers than older officers. Therefore, the average age for OCS SF volunteers would be lower than the average age of all OCS officers three years after commissioning. This does not appear to be the case.

Year Group	USMA*	ROTC	OCS
2003	25.91	26.79	31.41
2004	26.20	26.82	31.26
2005	25.68	26.63	31.44

* Includes officers accessed into the Army
from other service academies

Table 6. Average Age of SF Volunteers YG 2003–2005.¹⁰³

The data examined by this thesis is insufficient to conclusively determine if an officer's marital status is a significant factor in his decision to volunteer for SF. However, the data does provide evidence that may indicate that marital status is not a significant barrier to volunteering for SF. The rates of marriage for SF volunteers, as seen in Table 7, show a substantial rise in the rate of marriage for USMA and ROTC officers and a significant, yet lower rate of increase, for OCS officers. However, without a

¹⁰³ USAJFKSWCS DSOP.

corresponding data point for officers who did not volunteer for SF, it is impossible to conclusively determine if these rates are higher or lower than the officer population in general. A recent study by RAND found that 21.2 percent of Army officers who had never been married entered their first marriage in FY 2005.¹⁰⁴ This marriage rate is a function of all previously unmarried officers in the Army, not just new officers, so the rate of marriage for new officers would be assumed to be much lower. Given these figures, it is assumed that the marital rates for SF volunteers are not significantly lower than those of their peers, but the exact difference cannot be determined. The marital rates of SF volunteers do show a significant data point when viewed by branch. The average percentage of married or divorced officers at commissioning was 24.8 percent and 39.5 percent for SF volunteers, a difference of almost 15 percent. When the married and divorced percentage of new officers (as seen in Figure 10) is compared to SF volunteers (as seen in Figure 13), no major trend emerges. However, when Infantry branch is examined, it shows a rise of almost 24 percent. Given that Infantry branch is the largest source of SF volunteers and has the largest number of officers who have never been married when they are commissioned, it seems logical to assume that if marriage were a significant barrier to volunteering for SF, the rate of married Infantry officers volunteering for SF would not demonstrate such a large percentage of change.

Year Group	USMA*	ROTC	OCS
2003	24.50%	40.70%	63.20%
2004	23.10%	38.40%	59.40%
2005	20.20%	36.40%	67.00%

Includes officers accessed into the Army
from other service academies

Table 7. Percent of Married and Divorced SF Volunteers YG 2003–2005.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Benjamin R. Karney and John S. Crown, *Families Under Stress: An Assessment of Data, Theory and Research on Marriage and Divorce in the Military* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2007), 86.

¹⁰⁵ DSOP.

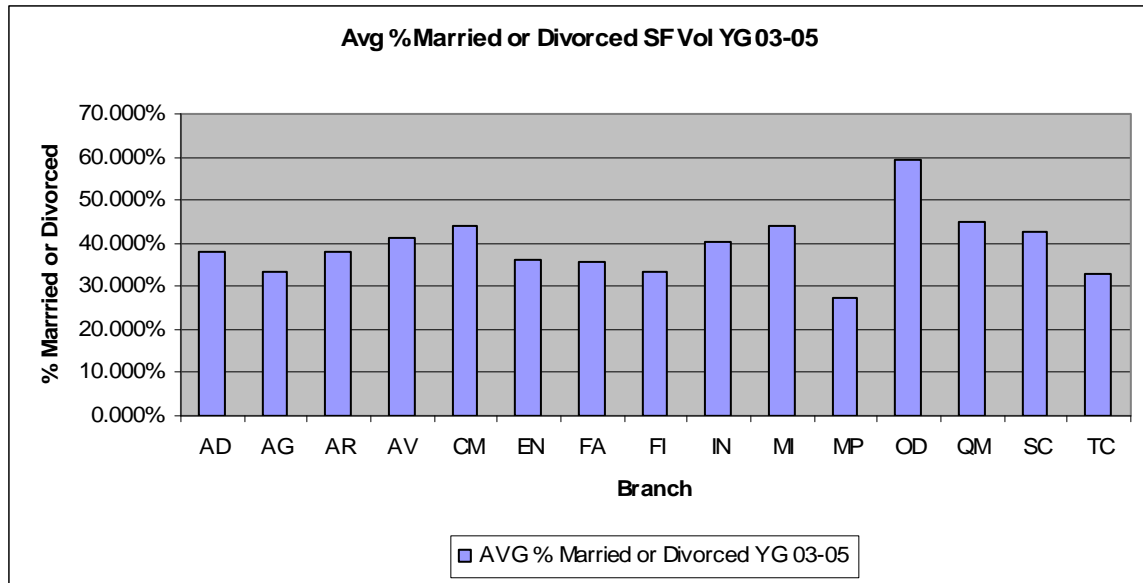


Figure 13. Average Percentage of Married or Divorces SF Volunteers by Branch YG 2003-2005.¹⁰⁶

3. Future Expectations

The analysis so far indicates that as the Army grows, the distribution of the branches will remain relatively constant as will the probability that an officer will be accessed into a specific branch. The probability that an officer will volunteer for SF appears to be more consistently related to his commissioning branch than his SOC, age, or marital status. Given with these two probabilities, this thesis proposes an expected value model to provide estimates of the number of SF volunteers for YG 2006–2010. Using the laws of conditional probabilities, the model can be expressed as

$$P(A \cap B) = P(C) \cdot P(A|C)$$

A particular year group is subdivided into fifteen branches. Considering the fifteen branches we can find the percentage chosen for each branch: “the probability of branch.” We can also find the average percentage of officers in each branch that volunteer for SF: “the conditional probability.”

¹⁰⁶ DSOP.

Using these probabilities, we can build a predictive expected-value model as follows:

$$E[SF\ YG_n] = [O_n * P(BR_1) * P(SF\ given\ BR_1)] + \dots + [O_n * P(BR_{15}) * P(SF\ given\ BR_{15})]$$

Where $E[SF\ YG_n]$ is the expected number of SF volunteers in YG_n , O_n is the total number of officers commissioned in YG_n , BR_{1-15} is the fifteen Army Competitive Category (ACC) branches, $P(BR_{1-15})$ is the average probability of receiving a specific branch at accessions from YG 2000–2006, and $P(SF\ given\ BR_{1-15})$ is the average probability of an officer from a specific branch volunteering for SF from YG 2003–2005. For the YG 2006 model, $P(BR_{1-15})$ is the actual probability of an officer receiving that branch at accession.

The results of the model for YG 2006–2010 are listed in Table 8.

Year Group	SF Volunteers
2006*	452
2007	511
2008	530
2009	550
2010	560

*Based on actual branch distribution
not average

Table 8. Expected SF Volunteers YG 2006–2010.

To test the accuracy of the model, the officer accessions totals for YG 2003–2005 were input into the model. The output of the model was then compared to the actual number of SF volunteers for that year group. The results are listed in Table 9.

Year Group	Model Value	Actual Volunteers
2003	439	401
2004	453	444
2005	447	497

Table 9. Model Test Results SF Volunteers YG 2003–2005.

Year Group	Errors	Percent Relative Error
2003	38	9.4 %
2004	9	2.02 %
2005	-50	-10.06

Table 10. Percent Errors SF Volunteers YG 2003–2005.

As Tables 9 and 10 demonstrate, the model is fairly accurate and does a good job in predicting volunteers from the test YGs.¹⁰⁷ The model predicts within about ± 10 percent of actual production, which is considered good for probability models.

In order to determine where the model produces the greatest errors, the actual $P(\text{BR}_{1-15})$ and $P(\text{SF given BR}_{1-15})$ for each given year were compared to the average $P(\text{BR}_{1-15})$ and $P(\text{SF given BR}_{1-15})$ used in the model. For each year group the actual $P(\text{BR}_{1-15})$ and the average $P(\text{BR}_{1-15})$ were very consistent, with no more than three branches in any one year group demonstrating a variance of plus or minus .01 and no branch demonstrating a variance of .02 or greater. The actual $P(\text{SF given BR}_{1-15})$ when compared to the average $P(\text{SF given BR}_{1-15})$ showed much greater variance. As many as ten branches in a single year group showed a variance of greater than .01, with a majority of the variances over .02 and at least one variance in each year group over .03. Therefore, the instability of the rate at which officers from a given branch volunteer for SF produces the majority of the errors exhibited by the model. Figure 14 shows this instability. It also shows that YG 2005 demonstrates the highest probability of officers to volunteer for SF in ten of the fifteen branches, including three of the four largest donor branches. As can be seen in Figure 14, YG 2004 is also closest to the average probability for the three year groups, which explains the accuracy of the model in predicting YG 2004's number of SF volunteers.

¹⁰⁷ YG 2003 exhibited a standard error of 19 and a standard deviation of 26.87; YG 2004 exhibited a standard error of 4.5 and a standard deviation of 6.36; YG 2005 exhibited a standard error of 25 and a standard deviation of 35.36.

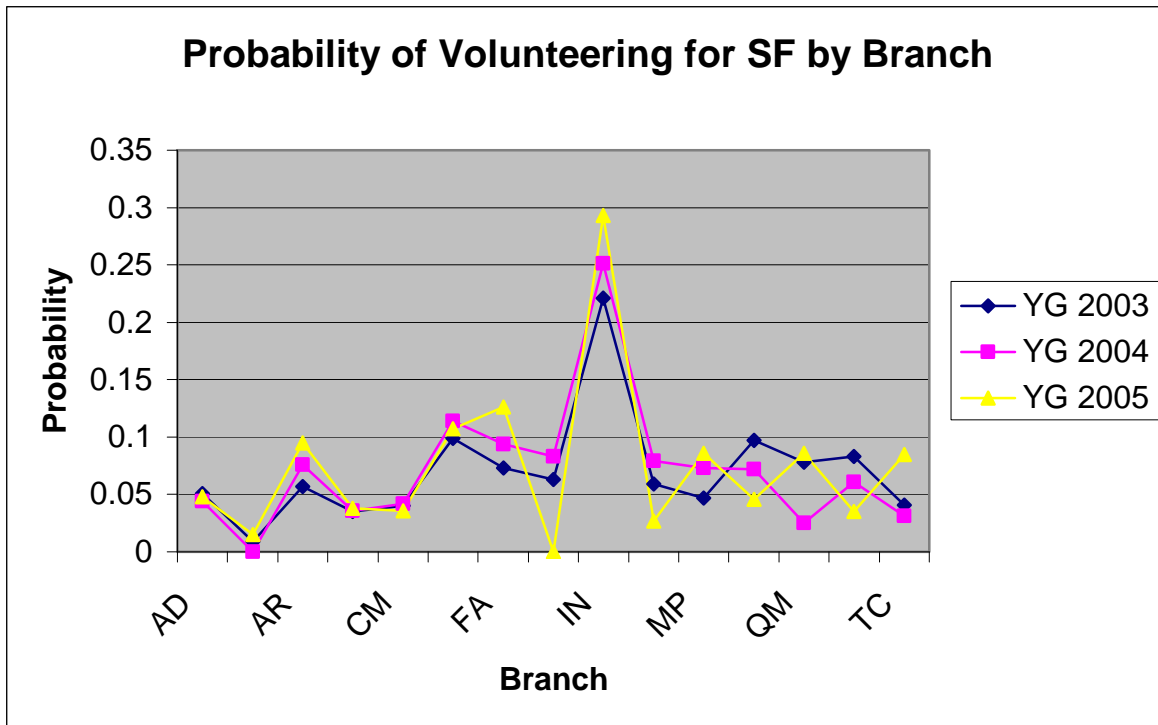


Figure 14. Probability of Volunteering for SF by Branch.¹⁰⁸

While the model is not very precise, it does provide some useful insights. It appears that, even when the errors exhibited by the model are considered, SF will continue to meet its officer recruitment goals in the future. However, this assertion is predicated primarily on the assumption that the probability that an officer will volunteer for SF will not radically change over the next five years. Substituting YG 2003's actual $P(\text{SF given BR}_{1-15})$ (which was the lowest probability of the three years examined) into the model produces expected volunteers above the current recruiting mission of 450 officers for each of the next five years, with the exception of YG 2006.¹⁰⁹

The fact that YG 2005 officers volunteered at a higher rate than their predecessors may support the findings of Chapter II that long conventional Army deployments have a positive effect on SF officer recruiting and that this positive impact grows as the length of

¹⁰⁸ DSOP.

¹⁰⁹ YG 06 – 412; YG 07 – 467; YG 08 – 484; YG 09 – 503; YG 10 – 512.

the deployment increases. It may also support the assertion that exposure to SF is a factor in increasing SF recruiting success. The primary recruiting window for YG 2005 officers opened in the spring of 2007 and closed in April 2008. Most of the junior officers deployed to OIF or OEF during this window would have experienced the standard fifteen-month deployment instituted in January 2007 as part of the “surge” strategy in Iraq. This timeframe also represents the highest number of U.S. Army troops deployed during the time period examined, so the likelihood of exposure to deployed SF personnel is assumed to be at its highest as well. The majority of YG 2003 and 2004 officers would have experienced a standard twelve-month deployment during their recruiting window.¹¹⁰ Just as the hypothesis from the previous chapter would indicate, YG 2005 has the highest SF volunteer rate. This is important when considering YG 2006 officers who are currently in their primary recruiting window. The current standard fifteen-month deployments end in August 2008 and troop levels have only recently begun to drop. Therefore, the previous hypothesis would indicate that YG 2006 officers will volunteer at rates resembling those of YG 2005, rather than the average of YGs 2003–2005. Using YG 2005’s $P(\text{SF given BR}_{1-15})$ in the model, the expected number of SF volunteers for YG 2006 rises to 501 officers.

As discussed in the previous chapters, there is no guarantee that OPTEMPO rates and exposure levels will remain consistently high in the coming years. If the discrepancy in OPTEMPO rates between conventional Army units and SF units drops, the hypothesis indicates that lower SF volunteer rates would result. General George Casey, the Army Chief of Staff, recently stated that in addition to a return to a standard twelve-month rotation this August (2008), Army units should start experiencing increased dwell time between deployments by year’s end, thus potentially reducing the number of officers exposed to SF in their primary recruiting window. This increase is a direct result of the Army’s effort to grow the force.¹¹¹ While this may be true, given the planned rate of officer production by the Army in the next five years, the volunteer rates would have to drop below the levels seen in YG 2003 for SF to fail to meet its officer recruiting goals. SF should monitor these rates so as to better adjust for changes over time as OPTEMPO rates change.

¹¹⁰ Many of these officers may have completed 15 month deployments, but not until after their primary recruiting window had already closed.

¹¹¹ Michelle Tan and Brendan McGarry, “General: More Dwell Time as Growth Goals Met,” *Army Times*, 21 April 2008, http://www.armytimes.com/news/2008/04/army_dwell_time_042108w/.

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V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CONCLUSIONS

The OPTEMPO environment the U.S. Army and SF face today is without precedent. Never has the all volunteer force been deployed in as great a number for as long a time. This rise in OPTEMPO, across the entire Army, has significantly reduced the disparity between conventional Army and SF deployment rates in the post-9/11 period. This high OPTEMPO has not produced a universally negative impact on officers. In fact, officers who deploy experience increased levels of mission satisfaction and financial gain. However, the importance of these positive aspects of deployment reaches a tipping point as deployments extend over time and the negative impacts of family separation and work overload begin to have a heavier impact. Therefore, SF's shorter but more frequent deployments are generally preferred to the conventional Army's longer deployments. This has a significant positive impact on SF officer recruitment. The deployment structure of both the conventional Army and SF are based on operational considerations which may change in the future. So while SF officer recruitment significantly benefits from this construct today, it may not in the years to come.

The significant level of OPTEMPO across the Army has significantly increased the level of exposure between conventional Army officers and SF personnel. Some of this exposure is due to establishment of the SORB. However, both the greatest amount and the most important exposure for officers considering volunteering for SF is with informal recruiters, SF personnel themselves. The interaction between conventional officers and SF personnel has increasingly highlighted multiple fundamental elements of the SF mission that are highly appealing to numerous officers. While the context of these fundamental elements has changed between the pre-and post-9/11 periods, their appeal has not. For this reason, the vast rise in exposure of these elements of the SF mission to conventional officers has also led to increased SF officer recruitment. This exposure has also increased the ability of conventional officers to witness the disparity between conventional Army and SF deployment structure, which has an enhancing effect on SF

officer recruitment. Evidence also suggests, albeit inconclusively, that the earlier and more continuous the exposure between conventional Army officers and SF personnel is, the more likely officers are to volunteer for SF and continue on to SF training.

The Army is planning a vast increase in officer production over the next several years in order to expand the force, thereby reducing OPTEMPO rates. This growth will require an increased use of OCS in order to meet accessions goals. This expansion of OCS will have secondary effects on the demographic make up of the officer corps, especially in terms of age and marital rates. This growth, however, will not grossly alter the make up of the Army by significantly changing the distribution of each branch within the Army. These changes do not appear to signal an issue for future SF officer recruitment at this time. SF has traditionally drawn heavily from the combat arms branches, which will remain the largest in Army. SF also does not appear to have a significant issue attracting officers who are somewhat older than average or married. A conditional probability model developed for this thesis predicts that SF will meet its officer recruitment mission through YG 2010. However, this model is based on the key assumption that SF volunteer rates in the future will remain roughly the same as they have been for the last three years. The extent to which this assumption is true can only be determined over time.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

This thesis has shown that SF officer recruiting appears promising for the next several years despite the challenges of today's dynamic operational environment. There are two main reasons behind this success: the aspects of mission satisfaction associated with SF which appears to be consistent across time and the benefits of SF OPTEMPO structure which may be temporary in nature. Both of these elements are currently enhanced by SF's increased exposure to the conventional Army. SF missions and OPTEMPO structure are dictated by operational considerations and are outside the ability of recruiters to impact. However, while exposure is related to operational considerations, it can be directly impacted by recruiters.

Therefore, the recommendations of this thesis will focus solely on improving exposure in order to ensure long term officer recruiting success. Exposure has a consistent element, the SORB, and a more temporary element, informal recruiters. This thesis offers four recommendations intended to enhance the positive impacts of exposure and ensure its benefits continue to be realized, even when the current OPTEMPO conditions change. These recommendations are intentionally general in nature so as not to limit the ideas of officers and NCOs who may implement them in the future.

1. Identify Informal Recruiters

This thesis identified three main groups of informal recruiters: SF cadre members at USMA and ROTC, peers, and SF personnel in operational units. This list is not assumed to be exhaustive. The SORB, in conjunction with USAJFKSWCS DSOP and HRC, should identify SF officers and NCOs currently serving in assignment that may bring them in contact with potential SF volunteers. Particular attention should be paid to indentifying informal recruiters that are exposed to OCS officers, as they will make up the largest number of officers commissioned for the next five years.¹¹²

2. Connect Informal Recruiters with Formal Recruiters

Once identified, the SORB should take the lead in contacting informal recruiters. This contact could be on an individual basis, such as to SF individuals serving at USMA or in ROTC, or to whole units preparing to deploy for OIF and OEF. The SORB uses mass emails to reach officers who are entering their primary recruiting window. Similar contact should be made to the SF community writ large. This contact should include any elements of information recruiters consider critical for potential officer volunteers to know, such as no later than dates for volunteering or recruiting points of contacts for specific units or installations. This contact should take place routinely as new informal recruiters are identified or as personnel change over. This routine connectivity would

¹¹² One potential group of officers that may be able to address this population is former SF NCOs who have been selected to attend OCS. Another is officers returning to their units after successful completion of SFAS.

essentially establish an “alumni” network that could vastly extend the SROBs reach. Enabling and encouraging SF personnel who are outside the SORB to take a more active role in identifying potential recruits may also improve the quality of officers who are recruited as well.¹¹³

3. Identify and Contact High Interest / High Potential Recruits Earlier

Officers with high interest or high potential for service in SF should be identified and contacted earlier than their recruiting window in order to provide these officers the greatest amount of exposure to SF. This identification should be facilitated by the network of informal recruiters identified and contacted by the SORB.¹¹⁴ This early contact may ensure SF exposure to those officers with the highest likelihood for volunteering, even as OPTEMPO changes over time. It may also help to reduce the indecision some officers reported experiencing at their volunteer deadline. The prevalence of information technology today, specifically email, can enable recruiters to establish and maintain connections with these officers relatively quickly and effectively despite the challenges presented by high deployment rates.¹¹⁵

4. Maintain Consistent Exposure to SF

Recruiters should maintain regular contact with identified potential and actual SF volunteers until they complete SFAS.¹¹⁶ This constant exposure may serve not only to build a potential volunteer’s interest in SF, but also to maintain it over time despite changing professional conditions, such as new job opportunities offered by an officer’s

¹¹³ Swierkowski and Burrell identified alumni networks as a key element of recruiting for multiple civilian organizations and recommend SF establish just such a network in order to improve the quality of SF recruits. See Swierkowski and Burrell, 68-69.

¹¹⁴ Swierkowski and Burrell provide multiple specific techniques to identify and develop relationships with personnel with high interest or potential for SF service. See Swierkowski and Burrell, 56-61.

¹¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of the potential use of email to increase recruiter effectiveness, see George F. McGrath, III, “Email Marketing for U.S. Army and Special Operations Forces (SOF) Recruiting” (Master’s Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, December 2007).

¹¹⁶ Assigning this responsibility to recruiters (rather than USAJFKSWCS DSOP or HRC) not only reduces the numbers of officers handled by a single individual, but also helps link recruiters to those officers who may influence others to volunteer when they return to their units.

branch or unit, or life changes, such as getting married or having children. This contact should not simply be focused on the procedural aspects of volunteering for SF or the training pipeline, but should seek to highlight the reason most officers site for volunteering for SF, increased mission satisfaction.¹¹⁷ This consistent exposure may not only lead to a greater number of officer volunteers but also a higher number of officers who follow then follow through to attend SFAS.

C. CONTINUED AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis recommends continued examination of multiple areas discussed in this and new research on multiple topics related to SF officer recruitment in the future.

1. Continued Research

In order to examine the effects of the relationships and predictions shown in this thesis over time and changing conditions, SF should continue to monitor the following data:

- Army accessions data specifically as it relates to SOC and branch
- Army retention rates specifically as it relates to SOC and branch
- SF volunteer rates specifically as it relates to SOC and branch

2. New Research

In order to further examine issues related to SF officer recruiting, but not thoroughly explored in this thesis, SF should consider research in the following areas:

- The differences between accession, retention and SF volunteer rates for OCS in-service and enlistment option officers
- The impact of marriage on SF volunteer rates
- The impact of length of and timing of exposure on SF volunteer rates
- The reasons officers do not volunteer for SF (as articulated by officers who choose not to volunteer)

¹¹⁷ This need not require the development of new information or recruiting products for use by the SORB or others. USAJFKSWCS currently publishes *SPECIAL WARFARE*, a professional journal for ARSOF, on a bi-monthly basis. This journal contains multiple articles ranging from firsthand accounts of SF missions to changing personnel policies for SF officers. This journal is available electronically and could be easily distributed regularly by the SORB via email or placed on an internet webpage for access by potential recruits.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWS

A. SPECIAL OPERATIONS RECRUITING BATTALION (SORB), USAJFKSWCS DIRECTORATE OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS (DSOP), AND HUMAN RESOURCES COMMAND (HRC)

The author conducted numerous interviews and correspondence with multiple members of the SORB, USAJFKSWCS DSOP, and HRC during the writing of this thesis. The correspondence took place from February 2007 until May 2008 and consisted of both emails and phone conversations. The majority of this correspondence was focused on background information, thesis concept development, and requests for input on various thesis chapters. The majority of the correspondence and interviews with USAJFKSWCS DSOP and HRC, specifically, were focused on their role in supporting SORB recruiting and requests for specific demographic data.

The author conducted detailed interviews with multiple members of the SORB from 14–18 April 2008. These interviews were conducted at Ft. Bragg, NC, and included both officers and NCOs from the SORB headquarters and NCOs from D Company, SORB. These officers and NCOs were a mix of both SF qualified personnel serving in recruiting assignments and non-SF qualified recruiters assigned to the SORB. These interviews covered background information on the SORB as well as recruiters' experiences and impressions on officer recruitment. The core questions of these interviews were:

- Background information on the history, structure, and operations of the SORB.
- What is a recruiter's role in officer recruiting?
- What are officers' primary reasons for volunteering for SF?
- What are officers' primary concerns about volunteering for SF?
- Why do you believe that SF is able to recruit more officers post-9/11?

The primary limitation of these interviews is the limited make up of the sample population. As discussed in Chapter III, Ft. Bragg, NC, historically, has the highest volunteer rates of any recruiting detachment. For this reason, the experiences and impressions of these recruiters may not be indicative of recruiters at other recruiting detachments.

B. USMA CADRE

The author conducted email correspondence and telephonic interviews with two officers currently assigned to USMA. Both officers have been assigned to USMA for one full academic year. Interviews with these officers focused on background information on their positions, their interaction with cadets in regards to SF, and their impression of USMA cadets' thoughts on SF. The core questions of these interviews were:

- What is your level of interaction with students?
- What influence do cadre members have on cadet's branching decisions?
- What is the level of students' interests in SF?
- What are cadets' impressions of SF?
- What are cadets' concerns about SF?
- What is your level of interaction with SF recruiters?

The most significant limitations to the information gained from these interviews are the small sample size and differences between USMA and ROTC cadre. Two officers is a significant portion of the SF officers assigned to USMA, however it is a small sample of SF personnel assigned as cadre at USMA or ROTC. USMA and ROTC programs and cadets also differ significantly; therefore, ROTC cadre experiences may vary significantly from USMA cadre.

C. RECENT VOLUNTEERS

The author interviewed eleven total officers who have volunteered for SF in the post-9/11 period. These officers were interviewed in two separate manners: individually

or as a member of a focus group. Interviews were conducted by the author with three officers between March and April 2008. These interviews included both email correspondence and face to face meetings. These officers included one YG 2004 officer and two YG 2006 officers. The author conducted two focus group secessions while at Ft. Bragg, NC, on 17 April. These officers were all attending the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). Seven of these officers were from YG 2003 and one was from YG 2002.

These eleven officers, while small in number, generally mirror the demographic make up of SF volunteers. Three officers were commissioned through USMA, another three through OCS, and the remaining five through ROTC. All were combat arms officers (nine Infantry, one Armor, and one Field Artillery). Over half (six) of the officers were married. Every officer interviewed had at least one deployment to OIF or OEF, with the vast majority of these deployments lasting twelve months.

These interviews and focus groups centered on various aspects why the officer chose to volunteer for SF, what his concerns were about volunteering, and how exposure to SF impacted both these areas. These officers were also asked to comment on their impression of their peers thoughts on SF as well. The core questions of these interviews were:

- When were you exposed to SF?
- Who were your primary influencers to volunteer for SF?
- What were your perceptions of SF prior to volunteering?
- Did you have interaction with recruiters?
- What were the primary reasons you volunteered for SF?
- Why did your peers volunteer / not volunteer?

The primary limitation of this group of officers is its small sample size. This group represents only a small fraction of the number of officers who have volunteered for

SF in the post-9/11 period. The majority of these officers were also attending the SFQC, which may have altered their perception of SF from the time they volunteered to the time they were interviewed.

APPENDIX B: DATA

A. OFFICERS EXAMINED

This thesis examined only Active Component (AC) officers in Army Competitive Category (ACC) basic branches commissioned through one of the military academies, ROTC, or OCS in order to prevent statistical errors produced by the inclusion of a large number of officers who are not able to volunteer for SF.¹¹⁸ This group (AC ACC officers) represents that vast majority of officers commissioned by the Army and 97 percent of all officers who volunteer for SF.¹¹⁹ Officers commissioned through direct appointment are excluded as are officers who joined the Army via inter-service transfer. The ACC branches include: Air Defense (AD), Adjutant General (AG), Armor (AR), Aviation (AV), Chemical (CM), Engineer (EN), Field Artillery (FA), Finance (FI), Infantry (IN), Military Intelligence (MI), Military Police (MP), Ordnance (OD), Quartermaster (QM), Signal Corps (SC), and Transportation Corps (TC).

B. RANGE

This thesis is most concerned with the impacts of the environment of the post-9/11 period. Detailed data was obtained for all ACC officers commissioned in YG 2000 – 2006. This represents all officer year groups that were eligible to volunteer for SF in the post-9/11 period.¹²⁰ For reasons of data availability, data on SF volunteers is limited to the most recent three year groups of volunteers (YG 2003-2005). This represents over 1,300 SF volunteers.

¹¹⁸ Students of the military academies of each of the uniformed services, not just USMA, may be commissioned directly into the Army upon graduation. These officers are not considered inter-service transfers.

¹¹⁹ Of the 1,342 SF volunteers from YG 2003-2005, 21 (1.5 percent) were inter-service transfers and 19 (1.4 percent) were Army officers from the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) category rather than ACC.

¹²⁰ At the time of this data request, YG 2007 officer accessions data had not been validated for release.

C. SOURCES

Three principal sources provided the data for this thesis: the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), Department of the Army (DA) Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (G-1), and U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (USAJFKSWCS) Directorate of Special Operations Proponency (DSOP). The DMDC is a support organization of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. DMDC routinely provides personnel data for the Department of Defense (DOD) and non-DOD agencies and organizations for study. DMDC did not provide access to primary documents or databases, but provided consolidated and cross referenced spreadsheets based on specific data requests. This data was primarily focused on officer accession demographics. DA G-1 is the primary office of responsibilities for all aspects of personnel management in the Army to include accessions and retention. Officers in the G-1 provided multiple briefings and correspondence. This data is primarily focused on future accessions goals and current retention rates.

USAJFKSWCS DSOP is the primary office of responsible for SF personnel management to included recruiting. USAJFKSWCS DSOP provided access to the Officer Record Briefs (ORB) for each officer who has volunteered for SF in YG 2003-2005. This document was used to determine the demographics of SF officers at the time they volunteered for SF. It should also be noted that these files were grouped by officer year group not by the recruiting year in which the officer volunteered. Generally, these two years align, however, waivers are granted for officers who missed their primary recruiting window. Therefore, this thesis will only refer to officers by their year group, not their recruiting year.

D. LIMITATIONS

There are three primary limitations to the data used for analysis in this thesis: error within the data sets, the inclusion of females in the Army accessions data, and the issue of volunteer quality.

The potential for error exists within each of the primary sets of data used for analysis. Recently, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) discovered inconsistencies between DMDC provided data and data provided by the armed services themselves on officer commissioning totals. The reason for these inconsistencies is unknown and DOD did not fully concur with the GAO's findings or their recommendations to rectify potential inconsistencies.¹²¹ Inconsistencies were also noted between data provided by DMDC and the Army G-1 as well.¹²² To mitigate many of these potential errors, this thesis will use DMDC data on officer commissioning from YG 2000 – 2006. It will use Army G-1 data for YG 2007, since DMDC data was not available at the time of this writing. It will also use Army G-1 provided data for predictions of future accessions.

Additional limitations may be incurred due to the inclusion of females in the data for Army accessions. Females are prohibited from volunteering for SF duty. This could result in an overstatement/understatement of the probability that an officer of a specific year group, source of commission (SOC) or branch would volunteer for SF if the percentage of female officers in that year group, SOC, or branch varies. This potential error is assessed to be low for multiple reasons. First, the percentage of females officers accessed has remained relatively constant in the post-9/11 time period.¹²³ Second, the percentage of females from each source of commission has also remained relatively constant.¹²⁴ Third, at least a third of females accessed in the Army are done so by direct

¹²¹ Derek B. Stewart, *Military Personnel: DMDC Data on Officers' Commissioning Programs is Insufficiently Reliable and Needs to be Corrected*, GAO-07-372R, (Washington, D.C.: 8 March 2007), 1-9, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d07372r.pdf>.

¹²² The only comparable data between the two sources is FY 06 commissioning data broken down by source of commission. There is a 2 percent difference (101 total officers) between the two sets of data. The difference exists predominately in the reported number of ROTC accessions (a 90 officer difference). DMDC consistently reported higher numbers of officers commissioned by the various sources.

¹²³ The Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness, "Population Representation in the Military Services FY 2003, FY 2004, FY 2005, FY 2006," <http://www.defenselink.mil/prhome/mpp.html>. The mean percentage of females officers accessed from 2000-2006 is 20.8 percent with a standard deviation of less than 1 percent.

¹²⁴ The Office of the Under Secretary for Personnel and Readiness. The mean percent of females assessed and standard deviation by SOC: USMA - 15.4 percent with less than 1 percent standard deviation, ROTC - 21 percent with a 1 percent standard deviation, OCS - 13 percent with a 3 percent standard deviation.

appointment, thereby reducing their number in the data pool examined by this thesis. Finally, females are barred, or limited in their numbers, in the branches that produce the highest number of SF volunteers (like Infantry, Army or Field Artillery). So while some branches may display some over/under statement of probability to volunteer SF, those branches that are historically most likely to volunteer should suffer from the least amount of error. To additionally control for this error, this thesis assumes that the percentage of female officers in each respective branch has remained constant during the time periods examined.

An important limitation of this thesis is the aspect of volunteer quality. The data used for SF volunteers was drawn from the packets of all officers who applied for SF in their given year group. This data was not cross referenced by whether or not the particular officer was selected by the Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) selection board for attendance at Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) or if the officer was selected at SFAS for attendance at the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC). Selection for SFAS and for the SFQC is an important measure of quality of volunteers. This thesis does not examine this aspect of recruiting. It relies on the assumption that the ARSOF board and the SFAS cadre will select the highest quality officers for attendance at the SFQC based on their records and performance. The logical continuation of this assumption is that the greater the size of the volunteer pool, the greater the ability of ARSOF board members and SFAS cadre to select high quality officers.

E. DATA TABLES

USMA and other Service Academies Accessions FY 2000-2006

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
AD	54	65	58	51	63	35	38
AG	21	27	21	15	16	18	17
AR	119	116	124	121	126	134	120
AV	105	105	106	109	104	124	107
CM	2	1	2	8	10	9	3
EN	103	105	110	93	104	100	92
FA	158	122	112	129	124	91	90
FI	13	7	6	0	1	2	6
IN	165	165	218	209	214	220	202
MI	43	50	47	46	47	75	58
MP	22	32	25	23	18	26	21
OD	13	13	10	3	15	8	11
QM	22	13	23	9	15	12	14
SC	47	53	48	20	30	38	36
TC	21	18	26	12	17	14	14

Table 11. USMA and Other Service Academies Accession YG 2000-2006.

ROTC Accessions FY 2000-2006

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
AD	113	119	160	131	126	83	91
AG	60	46	18	67	40	33	39
AR	211	215	234	254	200	291	211
AV	197	165	152	169	165	181	163
CM	132	135	145	135	117	124	102
EN	184	171	159	171	223	151	164
FA	238	279	340	339	380	275	271
FI	32	22	15	22	19	16	10
IN	413	381	463	426	429	437	354
MI	185	114	37	137	190	130	124
MP	92	86	83	66	93	79	91
OD	183	157	172	126	190	177	146
QM	175	161	96	96	141	185	145
SC	196	217	182	216	247	173	120
TC	154	143	101	122	169	174	151

Table 12. ROTC Accessions YG 2000–2006.

OCS Accessions FY 2000-2006

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
AD	43	65	63	54	61	71	77
AG	24	26	12	28	12	15	35
AR	49	70	77	66	84	82	69
AV	11	10	12	8	9	10	17
CM	22	45	59	55	40	61	52
EN	49	55	72	69	85	85	114
FA	77	67	115	133	123	109	132
FI	12	15	17	8	4	2	12
IN	100	145	165	172	126	159	291
MI	55	60	77	86	41	54	120
MP	31	36	37	40	39	46	56
OD	36	38	68	67	30	55	73
QM	36	42	93	62	46	71	89
SC	51	90	83	77	81	104	124
TC	23	47	54	63	39	47	83

Table 13. OCS Accessions YG 2000–2006.

SF Volunteers USMA and other Service Academies YG 2003-2005

	2003	2004	2005
AD	2	1	1
AG	0	0	0
AR	9	9	9
AV	2	3	4
CM	0	1	1
EN	8	10	10
FA	8	9	7
FI	1	1	0
IN	64	52	69
MI	1	0	0
MP	0	2	1
OD	0	1	0
QM	1	1	0
SC	2	1	1
TC	0	0	1

Table 14. SF Volunteers USMA and other Service Academies YG 2003–2005.

SF Volunteers ROTC YG 2032-2005

	2003	2004	2005
AD	9	7	4
AG	1	0	1
AR	14	14	32
AV	8	6	8
CM	5	2	4
EN	19	34	17
FA	25	42	38
FI	1	0	0
IN	81	113	128
MI	9	17	2
MP	5	7	11
OD	17	15	11
QM	8	3	22
SC	21	18	8
TC	4	6	19

Table 15. SF Volunteers ROTC YG 2003–2005.

SF Volunteers OCS YG 2003-2005

	2003	2004	2005
AD	1	3	4
AG	0	0	0
AR	2	8	7
AV	0	1	0
CM	3	4	2
EN	6	3	9
FA	11	8	15
FI	0	1	0
IN	33	28	42
MI	6	5	5
MP	1	2	1
OD	2	1	0
QM	4	1	1
SC	3	3	2
TC	4	1	0

Table 16. SF Volunteers OCS YG 2003-2005.

Accessions Avg Age YG 2000-2006							
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
AD	24.64	25.06	24.77	24.88	24.68	25.34	25.19
AG	25.35	25.61	25.65	25.12	25.54	25.70	25.92
AR	23.96	24.24	24.27	24.24	24.29	23.91	23.86
AV	23.63	23.85	23.54	23.33	23.47	23.17	23.33
CM	24.78	25.22	25.48	25.43	25.36	25.37	25.23
EN	23.99	24.21	24.32	24.41	24.18	24.49	24.71
FA	24.25	24.28	24.63	24.48	24.32	24.22	24.36
FI	25.14	25.91	26.92	25.40	26.25	25.95	27.00
IN	24.30	24.39	24.44	24.38	24.23	24.17	24.49
MI	24.96	25.07	25.81	24.65	24.35	24.48	25.28
MP	24.63	24.51	24.90	25.28	25.00	25.10	25.66
OD	24.95	25.21	25.63	25.65	24.84	25.58	25.50
QM	24.85	25.26	26.45	26.13	25.49	25.51	26.02
SC	24.68	25.10	25.16	25.06	25.00	25.41	26.16
TC	24.50	25.21	25.69	25.86	24.95	25.03	25.49

Table 17. Average Age at Accessions YG 2000–2006.

SF Volunteers Avg Age YG 2003-2005			
	2003	2004	2005
AD	26.16	27.64	27.33
AG	25.00	0.00	25.00
AR	26.88	28.13	27.08
AV	25.60	28.20	25.58
CM	27.13	31.00	27.86
EN	27.56	26.45	27.61
FA	27.82	27.10	27.18
FI	27.00	28.50	0.00
IN	27.51	27.02	27.24
MI	26.69	29.18	31.14
MP	26.33	27.36	27.46
OD	27.42	27.94	28.27
QM	28.31	30.00	26.78
SC	27.04	27.64	28.20
TC	27.88	27.71	26.90

Table 18. Average Age of SF Volunteer YG 2003-2005.

Avg Percentage of Married and Divorced Officers at Accessions YG 2000-2006

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
AD	25.2%	27.7%	25.3%	24.6%	27.9%	31.2%	25.2%
AG	48.6%	38.4%	40.7%	30.6%	36.8%	43.9%	52.2%
AR	19.3%	25.9%	22.5%	18.1%	25.1%	16.4%	21.2%
AV	16.0%	14.6%	12.5%	8.4%	16.5%	14.0%	19.2%
CM	28.0%	28.2%	31.1%	28.8%	22.8%	35.1%	28.0%
EN	21.4%	25.4%	20.2%	15.3%	23.2%	21.7%	27.8%
FA	25.8%	22.2%	24.5%	19.3%	20.2%	18.1%	25.2%
FI	36.8%	36.4%	52.6%	33.3%	58.3%	40.0%	60.7%
IN	16.3%	17.4%	17.0%	15.5%	15.9%	16.1%	15.4%
MI	26.1%	34.4%	37.3%	23.4%	20.5%	21.9%	30.1%
MP	31.7%	30.3%	29.7%	34.6%	27.3%	28.3%	40.5%
OD	28.9%	32.7%	33.9%	31.1%	28.5%	45.8%	31.3%
QM	30.9%	40.3%	46.9%	42.3%	38.1%	33.2%	38.7%
SC	31.0%	33.8%	34.2%	28.8%	29.5%	30.8%	40.0%
TC	29.1%	34.0%	32.4%	33.5%	28.6%	32.4%	34.3%

Table 19. Average Percentage of Married and Divorced Officers at Accessions YG 2000–2006.

SF Volunteers Avg Percent Married or Divorced YG 2003-2005

	2003	2004	2005
AD	33.3%	36.4%	44.4%
AG	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
AR	32.0%	48.4%	33.3%
AV	70.0%	20.0%	33.3%
CM	75.0%	28.6%	28.6%
EN	38.2%	31.9%	38.9%
FA	33.3%	42.4%	31.7%
FI	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
IN	42.1%	37.3%	41.0%
MI	25.0%	50.0%	57.1%
MP	33.3%	18.2%	30.8%
OD	57.9%	47.1%	72.7%
QM	69.2%	40.0%	26.1%
SC	30.8%	42.9%	54.5%
TC	25.0%	28.6%	45.0%

Table 20. Average Percentage of Married or Divorced SF Volunteers YG 2003-2005.

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